



PHD

Emerging selves in practice: How do I and others create my practice and how does my practice shape me and influence others?

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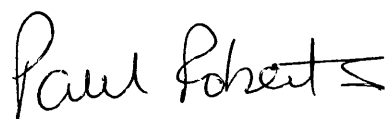
Emerging Selves in Practice:
How do I and others create my practice and
how does my practice shape me and influence
others?

Thesis submitted by Paul Roberts
for the degree of PhD
of the University of Bath
2003

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Roberts" with a stylized flourish at the end.

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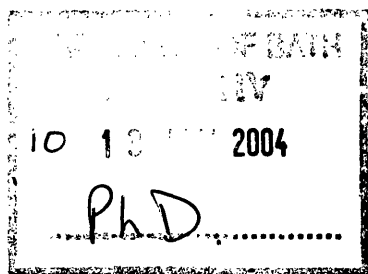
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Abstract

This thesis outlines a notion of selves as relational, multiple, embodied and imaginal, in contrast to the more dominant Cartesian framework in which selves have been conceived of and enacted as separate, singular, disembodied and literal. It shows how my practice as a management educator on a two year part-time postgraduate programme in People and Organisational Development and as an organisational change consultant in different contexts attempts, over time, to realise such a relational view of the way unique, contextualised, embodied selves emerge as I engage in and write about my practice with others.

The thesis represents a sustained inquiry into the dialectic of how I and others shape my practice and how my practice shapes me and influences others. It situates this inquiry within the traditions of action research. In addition, it will interrelate and engage critically with ideas from the fields of complexity theory, the psychology and sociology of the self, and postmodern thought.

I will both argue for and demonstrate that practice can be conceived of and carried out as an emergent, self-organising, relational activity. I will also indicate and show how I attempt to realise the holistic nature of practice, in which self, practice and context are intertwined, and where the traditional, separate boundaries between what is perceived as personal, professional and political are challenged and made more permeable and interconnected. I will do this by accounting for and presenting my thinking, learning, and description of and critical reflection on my practice using a number of different genres. These genres will include examples of autobiographical, narrative, scholarly, poetic, dialogical and journalistic writing and will illustrate and embody in writing different facets of my self. In giving 'voice' to these different aspects of my self, I will further demonstrate the multiple, imaginal and relational nature of the self.

Tracking my unique form of relational emergent practice, as it has evolved over the six years of this thesis, using the method of writing accounts of my work and sharing these with people I have been working with in cycles of action and reflection (what I call in short 'showing my work to others'), will demonstrate the originality of this work as well as its contribution to both 'living life as inquiry' and to a 'living educational theory'.

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Prologue: 'All the Fruit is Ripe'

Three Poems

In this prologue, I will initiate my thesis with reference to three poems.

Poem One

*All the fruit is ripe, plunged in fire, cooked,
And they have passed their test on earth, and one law is this:
That everything curls inwards like snakes,
Prophetic, dreaming on
The hills of heaven. And many things
Have to stay on the shoulders like a load
Of failure. However the roads
Are bad. For the chained elements,
Like horses, are going off to the side,
And the old
Laws of the earth. And a longing
For disintegration constantly comes. Many things however
Have to stay on the shoulders. Steadiness is essential.
Forwards, however, or backwards we will
Not look. Let us learn to live swaying
As in a rocking boat on the sea.*

Friedrich Holderlin

Translated by Robert Bly (1980)

Friday October 4th 2002 - “All the fruit is ripe, plunged in fire, cooked”

It is a glorious autumn morning, bright, mild and sunny, perhaps not too dissimilar to the clear azure skies of early morning New York on September 11th 2001. September has been exceptionally dry and mellow this year. A further month of weather records broken, another indication of actual and impending global warming.

I'm sitting in my study at home, having exhausted most of the possibilities for distraction. My emails from the last two days are answered, the shopping is done, the silk shirt that had been languishing at the bottom of the laundry basket because it needs special treatment is in the washing machine, and the eaves of my desk have been pulled out to accommodate the papers and books I want to refer to. The cleaner comes later this afternoon so it would be doubly stupid to embark on a round of house cleaning as way of avoiding starting writing. I could not resist dusting the printer though.

I'm at a beginning – there is a time in front of me that is both blank and full. I have created most of the next two months as a distinct space relatively free from the pressures and demands of normal work to draw together the different writings and thoughts of the last five and a half years since I began the PhD programme at the University of Bath. This vacant space has been consciously chosen to coincide with the autumn. For the last six years I have become increasingly aware that I feel at my most creative, confident and exuberant in the autumn. This generally lasts through until the early winter but, counter-intuitively, as the light returns in the mornings, my mood flattens, and my creativity becomes diminished.

I looked in the large grey file now sitting on my desk that I used to keep my early notes and papers from the CARPP programme in search of the starting date for the first workshop I attended. It was on February 6 & 7 1997, that is, in the last millennium. Since that time, over the sixty-eight months during which I have been engaged in the research that constitutes the basis for this PhD, much has happened. My second marriage has ended; I have moved house from living in a converted barn with twenty four acres of garden, fields and woodland to a semi-detached cottage in another delightful location; my older son has left home, first for five months in Mexico, and then very recently started University; my younger son has transformed from an uncooperative, rather surly pre-teenager into a charming, intelligent, thoughtful young man concerned with issues of globalisation and injustice; my father has had a number of minor health problems; a good friend's husband has died of cancer: I have seen Greenland and China: and so on. And this is just my life. Little mention of world issues.

I'm reminded of Arthur Frank's (1995) notion that the postmodern condition is characterised by the potential to experience life at a pace and range that is faster and broader than we can assimilate into our normal frames of reference. And yet the act of this writing is an attempt at an overall assimilation, an undertaking to create a frame or frames of reference that can hold and link the varied accounts and stories of my research activities.

Over the summer, I have thought about how to create an overall form for my thesis, how to engage in the sense making activity of connecting and relating the different work I have done so far, how to weave together a quilt from the patches of writing already created - to use a metaphor that was important in an earlier phase of my work at the time of transfer from MPhil to PhD. As thoughts on this have incubated, and I have prepared myself for a time of writing over the autumn, Holderlin's poem quoted at the beginning of this prologue has been re-awakened in my mind.

I came across and wrote down this poem in my journal over five years ago towards the early phase of my second marriage ending. It offered dark comfort then. I liked its acknowledging and facing up to despair and difficulty. Over the summer it gradually re-inserted itself into my consciousness, gently pressing for my attention. Now it seems appropriate to this autumn, to the harvest, to the smell of the curling smoke of the bonfire, to the task of this writing.

Poem Two

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time*

TS Eliot, Four quartets (1943)

I first properly, that is to say with due attention, came across these lines nearly ten years ago when I was working on a management development programme for Digital Equipment Company, at the height of their fortunes – before they went the way of many corporations in the early nineties to be de-layered, down-sized, and then, the final ignominy, bought by a competitor. I used it as part of a presentation I did on the nature of learning at the end of a residential week being held at the Meon Valley Golf and Country Club. I actually found the poem then in Kolbs' (1984) book 'Experiential Learning' where he uses it to illustrate the cyclical nature of learning.

I have to admit that I find myself dismayed at using it again. This is partly because since discovering them ten or so years ago these four lines of verse have reappeared and been quoted so many times in the different books and articles I have read that they have almost become a cliché. The other more potent source of dismay is the recognition of Eliot's point about the repetitive spirals of life, and our endless recycling through its patterns.

This summer, on my way home from China, I was sitting in Shanghai airport reading the climax of Ian Mckewan's (2002) brilliant new novel 'Atonement'. The novel, amongst many things, is a very clever exploration and deconstructive subversion of the authority of the author's narrative voice. Sitting in the airport departure lounge, I was gripped by an excitement in which the themes of his novel stimulated and overlapped with my nascent thinking about the themes and overall shape of my PhD.

Very close to the end of the book, Mckewan's narrator makes a similar point to Eliot, when she reflects in old age, reviewing the incidents of her life (p. 370);

"It occurs to me that I have not travelled so very far after all, since I wrote my little play. Or rather, I've made a huge digression and doubled back to my starting place."

The relevance of these two quotes now is that I find myself both at an end and at a beginning. The end is marked by the completion of the phase of my research where for over five years, I have been writing relatively separate, self-contained pieces of text about my life, my ideas and my work. The beginning is the start now of the attempt to find and shape an emergent form to situate and connect these different pieces, to select and emphasise some, take excerpts from others, and possibly reject others altogether. At the moment, all I have for externalised form is the three poems that comprise this

prologue, many notes in the journal I have been using to record and jot down my thoughts on my thesis, and a loose idea of how to structure my work. Previous experience, notably the twenty thousand words I wrote in three intense weeks last November on 'ideas of the self', (when I had only one sheet of A4 notes to guide me), give me confidence that it is in the actual writing itself that the form will emerge, rather than being given a priori. I'm also heartened by a recent session at the CARPP conference in Hawkwood this September in which Judi Marshall encouraged the participants in the workshop to use the writing process itself as an exploration of form, rather than as the realisation of a pre-given form.

In fact, it is this capacity to work with an emerging form, and the relationship between the parts and an emergent whole, that is a large part of my interest in complexity theory, which will be a key resource for this thesis. This will be illustrated further in this thesis in my later accounts of working with self-organising processes in groups and organisations (chapter eight), and in the accounts of what I, following Whitehead (1993), understand to be the emergent values embodied in my educational practice (chapter seven). The writing of this thesis is a further example and exploration of self-organisation, of the emergence of order and form from chaos (Prigogine, 1984) and the interconnections between self-organisation, emergence, complexity and creativity (Stacey, 2000).

Poem Three

We Are Running

*running and
time is clocking us
from the edge like an only
daughter.
our mothers stream before us,
cradling their breasts in their
hands.
oh pray that what we want
is worth this running.
pray that what we are running
toward
is what we want.*

Lucille Clifton (1991)

For some of the time of my research I have been pre-occupied with the question ‘What is my practice?’ Influenced by my supervisor, Jack Whitehead, I have found it helpful to define part of my practice, the work I do on a two-year part-time postgraduate course, as an educator. I have come to prefer the term educator rather than developer to describe this and other aspects of my work, for reasons that are explained later in this thesis in chapter three.

I heard a story a number of years ago, which links to the question of ‘what is my practice?’ It was told by Michael Mead, one of the key figures in the founding of a men’s movement in the nineties, at a workshop held at Darlington Hall, in Devon. I cannot now recall the exact details of the story but the salient point is that the heroine of the story is faced with a difficult and dangerous task involving a large and ferocious tiger. In order to cope with the task, which at first sight is completely beyond her, she sits every day and takes some time to perform the craft she has been trained in. Eventually she is

able to perform the task. In discussing the story Michael Mead pointed out that her daily task is her form of spiritual practice and that we all need to be grounded in some repeated activity which is consciously performed as ritual practice. This activity does not have to take a conventionally spiritual form such as meditation – it could be any simple activity or task. Michael Mead then asked each of the participants at the workshop to say what we thought our daily practice was. I could not find an answer to this.

This story has stayed with me as I have thought about the question of ‘what is my practice?’ In the spring of last year (2001), when I was running in the woods alongside a stream in Southern Sweden, the answer to Michael Mead’s question about my practice occurred to me. It was running. Ever since I was living at the age of twenty-one on a run-down estate in Kentish Town, I have been running. This has not been a consistent activity. Since my early runs amongst the parks of North London, I have had long intervals of not running. But over time the desire to run has returned, and, with the recent thought of it as a form of practice, I have tried to be more disciplined and thoughtful in my running and to see it consciously as a form of practice that helps ground and centre my being.

Over the last eighteen months, running or some other form of exercise such as swimming or tennis, has become a more conscious, regular part of my life. I have tried to do this daily and now miss it when I am unable to do this. I have a regular running route along the old railway line, now a bridle path, close to where I live. Following anxious sleepless summer nights I have run this path in the very early morning as dawn breaks, as well as at the more normal times of first waking and midday. I have run this path in every season, currently observing how the light and sense of space along the path changes as the rich colours and thick leaves of early autumn give way to the sparse leafless trees of early winter.

In England, I have run along another disused railway line near Durham, encircled the Dartington Estate in Devon many times, run around the village of Plympton where my father’s family have their roots, run near Cheltenham, run on the outskirts of Stroud and just outside Bath. I have run in Los Angeles, alongside the signs outside houses promising immediate armed response to security alerts in the residential area where a good friend lives. Jet lagged, I have stumbled, fallen, and scraped my knees on the approach to the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. I have run along the quiet country lanes and paddocks of Placerville, close to Sacramento. I have run competitively with my sons around the perimeter of Stanley Park in Vancouver, (they won), and

companionably with them in the spectacular setting of Jasper in the Canadian Rockies. I would have run in Alaska if I had not hurt my back carrying too much luggage. I ran slowly, whilst my back was mending, on the running machine in the cruise ship as it sailed past the magnificent glaciers and mountains of south east Alaska. I have run ruggedly along the water-front in Stockholm, alongside the canals in Amsterdam, and euphorically skipped over the rods of fishermen alongside the Marmara sea in Istanbul. I have run at minus twenty degrees centigrade along the only road in Ilulussat, Greenland from the hotel to the airport and back again. I have become soaked in sweat in the summer heat of Lijang, the UNESCO world heritage site in the Yunnan Province, South West China and enjoyed running in the temperate winter sun of the Mexican pacific coast. I have been recently drenched running along the local bridleway.

I mention this now, because, in the same way that my writing will go on to describe and illuminate the various trajectories of my work and life over the last five years and beyond, writing about my running above performs a similar function of literally tracing my steps over the same time.

In her book 'The Four Fold Way', Arrien (1993) refers to different practices that can be used to develop what she calls "showing up and choosing to be present". Two of these practices are spending one hour in nature or out of doors every day and setting aside time for daily exercise. I have, after reading this, consciously tried to use running as a way to develop my presence and also to become more present to myself. This theme of presence will be further outlined in chapter one as it forms an important part of my early inquiry process. I heard Guy Glaxton claim in a talk about developing intuition through meditation at Roffey Park in April 2002 that in doing meditation he realised he was not becoming any more enlightened but he was "having some damned good ideas". Likewise, the activity and rhythms of running have not led in an instrumental way to me developing a stronger, more consistent sense of presence but I have found new insights and perspectives emerging spontaneously in my thinking when I run.

In a similar way, the discipline, rituals and rhythms of writing over the years about episodes of my life and my practice and experimenting with the styles of different writing genres have enabled me to become more present to the evolving meaning of my practice. This thesis, overall, is an attempt to elucidate that meaning and its evolution over time.

Introduction

The prologue, apart from the final two paragraphs, was written in October 2002. It initiated and formed the first section of my entire draft thesis, which I completed in the autumn and early winter of that year. As I indicated in response to the first poem in the prologue, the choice to write the bulk of my thesis in the autumn was a deliberate one to capitalise on the creativity and optimism I feel at that time of year. The writing of a first draft last autumn over a three month period, mostly free from other work commitments, was also an opportunity to allow the shape of the thesis to emerge in the writing of it.

It is now early spring 2003. I find, as I surmised in the prologue, that my mood has indeed flattened. Some of the confidence and exuberance of the autumn has diminished. A different, yet familiar, voice is making itself heard and felt in my life and in this writing.

The purpose of writing a first draft, as well as showing it to my supervisor, was also to continue and complete a final iteration of the form of practice that I have developed in the course of writing this thesis. I have described this as 'showing my work to others', and it is more fully elaborated in chapter one. Later in this thesis, I refer to how I understand this activity of making my writing available to others as an intervention into the 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998) that I am part of, which lead to unpredictable consequences and continuing re-definitions of myself and my practice in relation to others, and of others in relation to me. Chapter one describes some of the consequences met at earlier stages of my inquiry of showing my work to others.

Overall, responses to my first draft were very encouraging. Jack Whitehead, my supervisor wrote to me on the 8th January 2003:

"What a treat you sent me to read. I was startled and amazed by the transformation in your writings for your thesis, from the contributory fragmented writings I'd seen so far, with my difficulties of perceiving a 'whole' within the parts, to the captivating qualities of your 'whole' thesis"

Patricia Shaw, Visiting Professor at Hertfordshire University, wrote in an email dated 18th January 2003:

"Have I said yet how impressed I am? I think this is really something, this thesis, all the more unusual because it really does succeed in not being a victory narrative, while being impressive. So it forces me to ask what is it I am admiring? The erotic quality of your fine intelligence brought to bear on itself, unnerving at times in its riskiness, breathtaking in its scholarliness, downright ordinary at times, thank goodness, in the way it shows itself."

Professor Ralph Stacey wrote in an email dated 31st January 2003, in a complimentary but less eulogising fashion

"I think it is interesting and easy to read which cannot be said about many PhD theses."

From showing the first draft to others, it is clear that different people comment on it and interpret it in the light of perspectives that are meaningful to them. My supervisor, Jack Whitehead, focusses on my thesis as an example of 'living educational theory', and his responses have led me to strengthen this dimension of the thesis. Valerie Garrow, the Principal Researcher at Roffey Park, whose first degree was in French, commented that:

"It is very 'Proustian' in its ability to navigate various levels of time and memory and is very much a reflection of a post war generation striving for personal and material growth."

Patricia Shaw comments:

"I am struck that here is a piece of research that circles around, displays, unpicks and finally moves beyond ideas of narcissism and the narcissistic wound."

In offering these quotes at this very early stage, I am not intending to forestall any critical reaction nor present the thesis prematurely as a 'victory narrative' (Maclure, 1996). I use the quotes as an initial illustration of a process that has been developed throughout the thesis (and which will be further extensively illustrated in chapters seven and eight) of enabling the meaning of my practice, (in this instance, my PhD writing practice), to evolve through interaction with others (my local 'community of practice') in a way that aims to generate learning for me and others involved in my practice.

The overall challenge facing me now is how to integrate a work written between four and six months ago in a style that made conscious and extensive use of its own emergence over the time of its composition with the comments and thoughts generated by the writing, and also with the person I have become in my early spring incarnation.

I am, therefore, faced yet again and anew (as in TS Eliot's four lines quoted earlier) with the multiple inquiries that are the preoccupation of this thesis and which have faced me throughout. These are:

- How to account for the emergence of my practice and myself and the relationship between them over time?
- How to do justice to the continual, ongoing, shifting sense-making and complexity of the self as it is constituted in and constitutes the practices it is engaged in?
- How to give voice to the different aspects of myself and illustrate in practice and in my writing the theoretical expositions of the self I will give in chapter three?
- How to make the form and style of this thesis congruent with its subject matter?

My intention is to retain the bulk of the material I wrote the previous autumn. The comments I have received so far, and the further thinking I have done, have led me, though, to restructure the material in different ways. This is to help more explicitly bring out and express the multi-voiced nature of the self that is theorised in chapter three and illustrated in subsequent chapters. In giving form to the different voices of my self and my practice in the thesis, I am aiming to move beyond a narcissistic overly self-preoccupied inquiry into a more general exploration of identity and the dialectical relationship between self and practice – to extensively explore the question that is the sub-heading of this thesis: How do I and others create my practice and how does my practice shape me and influence others?

Part one of the thesis will outline the nature of the inquiries I have been engaged in over the six years of this thesis. Chapter one will indicate the methods and methodology of my inquiries and chapter two will begin to account for my practice within the traditions of case-study, action research and theories of learning.

Part two of the thesis will move on to explore and give written expression to the different voices involved in this inquiry. Chapter three will be an example of one particular voice – ‘a scholarly voice’ - and will constitute a major example of propositional theoretical writing in the thesis. Other chapters in part two will introduce two other significant voices – a ‘critical/cynical voice’ (chapter four) and a ‘personal autobiographical voice’ (chapter five).

Part three of the thesis will focus on practice and stories of practice. A different voice - a ‘reflexive, narrative voice of practice’ – gives shape to accounting for my practice. Two dimensions of my work will be outlined and critically explored in different chapters. The first, in chapter seven, will be my work as an educator on a part-time post-graduate programme in People and Organisational Development and will illustrate how I have developed my own ‘living educational theory’ (Whitehead, 1993). The second dimension, in chapter eight, will focus on my work as an organisational change consultant and how I have worked with self-organising processes in different organisational contexts.

Part four will bring together the different voices present in the thesis. Chapter nine will do this through exploring issues of epistemology and validity in relation to the thesis. Chapter ten, the final chapter, will do this through offering concluding reflections on the thesis in the form of an imaginary dialogue.

Part One

Chapter One

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I will give an overview of the shape and methods of my research in the form of a chronological account of the period from February 1997 unto the present (spring 2003), which is the span of time I have been engaged in the different inquiries constituting my research. For the purposes of writing this history, this account will be divided into six phases.

At the end of the chapter I will present a short overview of my inquiry methods.

Section one: the Diploma phase: February 1997- March 1998

When I began the CARPP programme at the University of Bath, my interest was in attaining a PhD in order to pursue an in-depth programme of study in a number of areas that interested me. I wanted further to develop my professional practice to encompass these areas in a way that gave greater satisfaction and purpose to my working life.

After attending the initial workshop on the programme in February 1997, I wrote the following passage as part of the first entry in the learning journal I was to keep for the next three years.

"What came across to me most strongly from the first CARPP event in February was the importance of choosing research that is significant and central to my life. I would like the research to provide a focus to draw together the different strands that I am interested in.

These strands are;

- complexity theory
- archetypal psychology
- organisations as religion - this could be a further image of organisations to be added to Gareth Morgan's (1997) list of metaphors, which would help locate this idea in an attractive and rigorous theoretical framework."

At the end of this first entry, I also wrote the lines:

"This question of practice is extremely important, not just for the research but for my working life, as I want the research to help lead me in a direction which can reorient my work. At the moment I identify with the lines of Dante's (1949) poem;

"In the middle of the road of my life
I awoke in a dark wood
where the true way was wholly lost."

I don't know if it is too much of an extravagance to hope that the research will enable the 'true way' to be rediscovered."

In beginning the process of inquiry, therefore, I, like others, had multiple agendas; an intellectual agenda to develop my understanding in areas of theoretical interest; a practice-based agenda about developing my work and finding a different niche for myself as an organisational consultant; and a personal agenda concerned with questions of purpose and meaning in mid-life.

In fact, the highly personal dimension of these multiple agendas, coupled with the break up of my second marriage, was to pre-occupy me for at least the next two years. Having successfully completed the Diploma phase of the CARPP programme in March 1998, I took a year out of the programme. During this time, I had a major depressive episode (to use the terms of conventional medical psychiatry), and/or underwent crisis-breakdown-breakthrough (in the framework of a more optimistic humanistic and transpersonal psychology), and/or experienced 'narrative wreckage', to use a term of Frank's (1995) that became highly meaningful for me.

Section two: rejoining and re-engaging February 1999 – January 2000

In February 1999, I rejoined the CARPP programme, entering a supervision group under the direction of Jack Whitehead from the School of Education, comprised of people like myself mainly working in the fields of management and organisational development. At this time, I wanted to move beyond the primarily intensely personal and introspective preoccupations of the past two years, re-engage more with the external world, and develop my practice.

In an entry in my journal then, dated 25 February 1999, I expressed this as follows:

"But what I think I have now realised is that I am *already* doing the work that I need to do, rather than having to discover or create a new direction. And with this has come a further realisation that my work and research on the CARPP programme can be about focussing on my current practice educating managers and how I can do this in a way that increasingly incorporates the interests I have.

So what I want to write about is to focus on my practice, my actual work with managers and organisations in all the different contexts that I am currently working in – rather than exclusively on my inner world as I did in the research for the first fifteen months of the CARPP programme. And I want to think about the work I am doing, both before I do it, and also afterwards, in terms of how it expresses the interests I have outlined. Then, rather than seeing my future work direction as a pre-defined state to which I am heading, I want it to emerge from what I am doing and the writing will help track and articulate this emergence.

And also rather than trying to theoretically find a way to link and synthesize the different interests I have, I will let them interact, and find a way of bringing them together through practice rather than more abstractly through theory."

At the time, this represented a major, (and, in retrospect, rather obvious!), realisation that, rather than looking outside of myself for a sought after life and work path, the direction of my work and research could emerge from paying close attention to and exploring work I was already doing. In addition, rather than building a grand, masterly intellectual synthesis out of the original theoretical interests I had, and connecting them with the new streams of interests I had found in postmodern thought, action research, and theories of education and learning, I could discover the way these interests inter-related through my practice. Without knowing it at the time, I was looking to institute an 'epistemology of practice' (Schon, 1995).

The above journal entry also presaged an insight I was to write further about in my journal in a later entry, dated 23rd October 1999;

"I am slowly seeing that it is possible to really take this idea of first person research and personal narrative seriously.

I do see that what is required and which excites me is to find my original form and style for the PhD. Up until now I have still thought of originality as lying in some brilliant new theory or theoretical synthesis but I can see that originality could be more personal, more genuinely unique, lying in the form and style of representation of knowledge as well as the content. Producing such a PhD could be a challenge to more conventional, traditional academic ways of writing a PhD and involves risk."

In fact, as part of the writing I have done subsequently, I have indeed written the kind of theoretical synthesis centred around ideas of the self, (located in chapter three of this thesis), that I was arguing against here. One difference from my original intention, though, is that this synthesis was completed in November 2001, after exploring different ways of writing about my practice and myself. In this instance, theory followed and emerged from practice.

So, on rejoining the CARPP programme in February 1999, I focussed my inquiries on writing different accounts of work I was engaged in, paying particular attention to how I was using and thinking about ideas from complexity theory and archetypal psychology in my practice. These writings, together with passages from my journal, and other more experimental writing such as a commentary on Jaworski's (1996) book 'Synchronicity: the inner path of leadership', (which appears in this thesis in chapter four), formed the basis of the transfer from MPhil to PhD paper I produced in January 2000.

In common with other people on the CARPP programme, the process of transfer was not particularly smooth or comfortable. Towards the end of the transfer meeting, a potential deadlock was produced resulting from the concerns raised by the two people conducting the transfer that my work was not sufficiently developed in some areas. Whilst I generally accepted their arguments in this regard, I also thought that, compared with others' work I had witnessed who had passed the transfer process, I had done enough work. Furthermore, the aim of my PhD. would be to address their concerns raised, rather than tackling them at the transfer stage. In response to the impasse reached, I was given a choice. This was whether to self-assess my transfer paper as a pass at that moment, or do more work to address the concerns raised before passing the transfer process. I took a deep breath and decided to do further work.

Some of the concerns expressed about my transfer paper were directed towards what was perceived as a lack of appropriate discipline and focus for my subsequent research. To address this, I sharpened the focus of my future inquiry into three main areas. These were expressed in the form of three questions with supplementary comments as follows:

1. How can I work more effectively with self-organising processes in groups to enable individual and organisational learning?

I need in my work to

- continue to articulate my understanding of these processes by relating them to theoretical work in the field of complexity
- write about how I work with them in my practice
- produce suitable evidence to substantiate my claims about the impact of my practice on others' learning.

2. How can I work with individuals and organisations in a way which makes fuller use of my and their creative imagination?

This question is founded on a critical perspective which will be further elaborated in my PhD. In short, this is about the way that much current organisational thinking and practice deadens the imagination. In terms of my practice I want to explore how to use storytelling and metaphor in creating a different kind of imaginative space for individuals and groups.

3. To what extent can I as an individual ensure that I am as fully present as I can be in the work that I do?

I think that being present is a necessary precondition to working effectively in the areas outlined in questions 1 and 2.

In asking this question I am assuming that the key limitations to my practice now, after the many trainings I have been through and the experiences I have had, are not skill and/or knowledge based. I am claiming that I have in place, at a high enough level of competence, the necessary skills which are the basic building blocks to be effective in my work - questioning skills, interpersonal skills, facilitation skills, consulting skills, presentational skills etc.

To be more effective in my practice, I am interested in understanding and realising the conditions, which allow me to utilise these skills and knowledge to the fullest. This links to questions I have already been exploring in my writing:

- How do I manage the anxiety I often feel in work situations so that it is not disabling?
- How do I ensure I sleep well enough the night before I am due to undertake a particular assignment so that I feel fresh, rested and available to others the following morning?
- How do I create enough space and time for reflection, recuperation and reinvigoration in a busy, demanding and multi-faceted working life?
- How do I manage my time and my workload to ensure that I am not overloaded and over pressurised so that the focus in my work becomes getting by, going through pre-established routines that I know will work well enough, rather than really being present to the creative possibilities in different situations?
- How do I ensure that my 'inner pre-occupations' and issues in my personal life do not dominate my psyche to the extent that that I am not available enough to my external practice and to engage in an external world of others?

These three areas of inquiry were to provide the focus for the next phase of my research.

Section three: the metaphor of the quilt: January – February 2000

At the time of transfer from MPhil to PhD, the metaphor of making a quilt became central to my thinking about the eventual form of my thesis. This metaphor had been suggested by reading Catherine Bateson's (1990) book 'Composing a Life' in which she says:

"I believe that our aesthetic sense, whether in works of art or in lives, has overfocussed on the struggle toward a single goal rather than on the fluid, the protean, the improvisatory. We see achievement as purposeful and monolithic, like the sculpting of a massive tree trunk that has first to be brought from the forest and then shaped by long labour to assert the artist's vision, rather than something crafted from odds and ends, like a patchwork quilt, and lovingly used to warm different nights and bodies."

This quote intimated a different way of conceiving my thesis. I saw that the separate pieces of writing that I had been doing so far, and intended to continue, were akin to sewing different patches of a quilt. This raised the question of how the final quilt would be assembled from the different patches. Did I need to have a strongly held vision of the final quilt in order to ensure that the different patches I was currently making would fit well together into an aesthetic whole? Or would the overall form of the quilt be suggested by the shape, colour and size of the separate, various and diverse patches? This question is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between the parts and the whole – between the separate pieces of writing done over the five and a half year period of my research and the eventual, overall form of my thesis.

Henry Bortoft (1996), originally a post-graduate student of David Bohm, has a sophisticated way of viewing the relationship between the whole and the parts. He argues against the traditional, mechanistic scientific method of reducing the whole to the sum of its parts. He does not, however, want to assert a transcendental whole, which exists prior to or beyond the parts in a controlling, determining relationship. Instead he says:

"If the whole becomes present within its parts, then a part is a place for the 'presencing' of the whole. If a part is to be a place in which the whole can be present, it cannot be "any old thing". Rather a part is special and not accidental, since it must be such as to let the whole come into presence. This speciality of the part is particularly important because it shows us the way to the whole. It clearly indicates that the way to the whole is into and through the parts. The whole is nowhere to be encountered except in the midst of the parts. It is not to be encountered by stepping back to take an overview, for it is not over and above the parts, as if it were some superior, all-encompassing entity. The whole is to be encountered by stepping right into the part. This is how we enter the nesting of the whole, and thus move into the whole as we pass through the parts." (p. 12).

In response to thinking about my thesis as akin to crafting a patchwork quilt, and stimulated by Bortoft's ideas about the relationship between the parts and the whole, I wrote, in the further work I decided to do to complete the transfer process:

"This implies that the challenge for me is to write about each of the parts, (i.e. to create each of the patches,) in such a way that the whole is revealed in them and that as this whole (the overall aesthetic pattern of the final quilt) is glimpsed, the

parts are more carefully selected and created and serve to make the whole more visible.”

My experience throughout this research has been of being offered occasional glimpses of a ‘whole’ in an unpredictable manner, which I was not consciously seeking at the time. These have nearly always occurred when travelling, in the process of being between places, particularly on long railway journeys, or, on a couple of occasions, whilst waiting in an airport lounge as a result of my flight being delayed. These welcome glimpses helped me both sense the overall shape my work was taking and gave me greater clarity about the next steps.

It is important to clarify, here, that I don’t mean to suggest that it was always the same unchanging ‘whole’, like a Platonic ideal, that was glimpsed. What I experienced on each occasion this occurred was the sense of a formative, evolving ‘whole’, which was sufficient at that time to enable me to grasp the meaning, direction, and shape the work was taking.

Section four: showing my writing to others, January 2000 – April 2001

Influenced by my supervisor, who was concerned that accounts of my work undertaken so far contained only my single voice, and by the growing versatility and ubiquity of electronic communication technology, I began to use email to send written accounts of work I had been engaged in to people who had been involved in the work, usually as clients. I also asked them for comments on the text sent. In so doing, I was aiming to enhance and create a further iteration of the cycles of action and reflection so far expressed in my writing, by using the writing to make a further intervention into the systems and with the individuals I was working with, and then reflect on the effects of the intervention.

As I began to do this, I thought it might be informative for the people I was working with to have access not just to the specific writing which referred to work undertaken with them, but also to the wider context of my research. Simultaneously, I had also become interested in the educational possibilities offered by the Internet. This led me, with the help of a professional designer, to create a web-site to locate all my writing on. In addition, I wanted to explore the possibilities that a web-site offered via hyperlinks for non-linear forms of representation through connecting different pieces of writing both

within the site and also for connecting my writing to relevant other sites. This web-site can be found on www.minotaursegg.co.uk.

The web-site was created in December 2000. On it, I stated that:

“The purpose of this site is to explore the possibilities of the web in creating a PhD such that:

- The shape of the PhD can take a more emergent, non-linear form
- Others can access and engage with my writing
- This site can be linked with other sites of relevance and interest”

For the purposes of providing an introduction to my PhD, work on the web-site, I formulated an overview of my inquiry practice together with the new guiding question that was now shaping my inquiry. This was described on the site as follows:

One overall question my PhD will be addressing is 'How do I constitute a practice and how does my practice constitute me and influence others?'

The writing will explore the dialectical relationship between my self and my practice through articulating the way that key autobiographical and work based experiences have shaped my practice (including my 'living values') as a management educator and organisational development practitioner. The major focus of my study will be on the way my practice has evolved in the period 1997-2002 in which I have been engaged in my PhD inquiry.

The PhD will argue that in most traditional accounts of management education and organisational development the real significance of context (personal, political and ecological) is at best partially considered and at worst stripped away. This argument will build on Fritjof Capra's (1996) insight from the Web of Life that systems thinking is contextual thinking. I will also argue that omitting the significance of context colludes with the denial of certain aspects of personal, political and ecological reality and privileges a more rational, linear, explanatory, imaginatively barren, and politically neutral account of organisational life.

To counter the denial of this reality I will aim to write about my practice in a way that attempts to articulate and demonstrate the significance of the influences of these dimensions on my work with individuals, groups and organisations. In doing

this I want to emphasise and substantiate the relevance of narrative rather than explanatory and propositional accounts of my practice.

Insights from complexity theory, in particular, the key concepts of emergence and self-organisation will be used to illustrate two interrelated areas. One is my understanding of and ways of working with self-organising processes in the groups and organisations in the different contexts in which I am engaged. The other is to understand my practice itself as an emergent, unpredictable, self-organising process, which arises through interaction between myself and the significant other people which shape and define my practice.

In doing this, part of the theoretical work will be to develop a post-modern theory of the self which emphasises relationship, multiplicity, process, embodiedness, and social and political constructedness in contrast to the modernist concept of self which is dominant in most writing on management and organisations as separate, monadic, singular, disembodied, and transcendent."

Such a perspective on the self referred to in the last paragraph above was written in October-November 2001, and is incorporated into this thesis in chapter three.

Shortly after creating the web-site, I started autobiographical writing. I decided to write two autobiographical passages, one relating to my first twenty-one years, and the other to my second twenty-one years. One purpose of this writing was to uncover and to try to make more explicit the influences that had shaped me and the way I thought of my practice. This autobiographical writing is contained in chapter five of this thesis.

My inquiry practice was now evolving to a point where I was showing the various accounts of my work, and also my autobiographical writing, to others that were involved - in the case of my first piece of autobiographical writing, to my parents. In April 2001, on my web-site, I wrote a summary of the process of showing my work to others, entitled 'Moving from individual reflection to public discourse'. I will reproduce the summary here in full, as the next section, as it is still a succinct and relevant overview of this phase of my inquiry.

Section five: moving from individual reflection to public discourse

"In January 2000, I collected and edited together writing I had done whilst engaged in the first two years of the CARPP programme as a submission to the University of Bath to transfer from an MPhil programme to a PhD programme. Some of this writing was highly personal referring to my experiences of separating from my second wife and subsequent depression. Some was more theoretical comprising traditional academically styled writing on action research and post-modernism. And some writing took the form of narrative accounts of my work with individuals and organisations in management education and development. The best of this writing found ways of weaving together my personal narrative with descriptive accounts of my professional work with relevant theoretical frameworks.

At the time of transfer, influenced by Ralph Stacey's (2000) work on complexity theory, as well as Fritjof Capra's (1996) central concept in *The Web of Life* of a network as being the defining feature of any living system, and social constructionist perspectives (Gergen, 1991), I was coming to a view of the self (and myself) embedded in a network of relationships that shaped both a personal life and a professional identity and practice. My writing arose from and was a product of my particular context of working and personal relationships. I also noted how in most accounts of work in organisations significant aspects of this context are omitted.

As part of the submission I made for the MPhil transfer process I stated that I would show my writing to different people who formed important parts of this network. This included family, friends, colleagues, my boss, and writers whose work I had found particularly illuminating. I theoretically conceived of this as a further iteration of the action-reflection cycle at the heart of action research – my writing was the fruits of my reflections on my personal situation, my work and ideas that I had found significant. The sharing of this writing was a further intervention into the web of relationships, which had generated that writing. At the time too I was particularly taken with Judi Marshall's work on 'Living life as inquiry' (see her chapter in Reason and Bradbury's 'Handbook of Action Research', 2000) which seemed to question and dissolve some of the traditional boundaries between personal and professional identity.

Initially I had envisaged showing my collected writing in the transfer paper as a systematic process in which I gave people my writing all at the same time, asked them for written responses. and then conducted tape-recorded semi-structured interviews with them about their responses. In practice the process was more haphazard and the

range, detail and depth of response hugely varied. My seventeen-year old son read the document slowly and thoroughly over a six-month period. Some people simply did not respond at all. This variety of response is much more characteristic of a living network than the kind of standardised and uniform response expected to give this part of my research traditional scientific validity. Each response was characteristic of my relationship with the responder and developed that relationship in idiosyncratic ways. I was, for example, heartened and impressed with the affirming response of my boss to reading material which I felt was disclosing of a period of personal crisis and which would in most organisations be viewed as an unwise political move to share with your 'superior'.

Although in theory I knew that such an action would generate unpredictable responses and unexpected emergent outcomes through both positive amplifying feedback loops and negative dampening loops, (to use the language of system dynamics), I was (of course) not prepared for the genuinely radical nature of this unpredictability. The most dramatic example of this was a new girlfriend, having read my writing, telling me starkly; 'You're still in love with your ex-wife', which led to the redefinition of my relationship with her and a renewed attempt at marital reconciliation.

The next phase of showing my work to others involved writing accounts of work I had been involved in and then sending it to the people I had been working with. The first time I did this was on a one-week programme on 'Business and Sustainability' I was facilitating at Schumacher College in April 2000. During the week I wrote a journal detailing my thoughts about the programme and then afterwards emailed it to the participants on the programme. I was generally disappointed with the lack of response to my account though it did lead to interesting discussions with two participants from the programme about the group dynamics that week which they said my writing had helped them to better understand.

In May 2000 I attended the annual conference of a European management Institute. I found myself very interested in the group dynamics of self-organisation at a number of sessions during the conference. On returning home after the conference I emailed my written reflections on these dynamics to four people from the Institute who I had worked with and who had attended the same sessions. Again the replies were very varied. One person did not respond. Another detailed how they found my comments thought provoking. Another suggested I send my comments to the Institute's chief executive.

In June 2000, I co-designed with two participants a residential on a MSc in management development for which I was the course director that had the theme; 'the edge of chaos -an inquiry into creativity'. This residential occurred about sixteen months into a two-year part time programme. After the residential I wrote a twelve-page account of my reflections on what had happened at the residential which I sent to each of the seven participants. On this occasion I received some very thoughtful and detailed responses from all the participants. In September that year I wrote and mailed to all the participants a further summarising comment on the responses they had sent me.

In the latter part of the year 2000, I wrote a long account of work I had been doing with a colleague over the period of twelve months with one organisation. I tried to write this account as genuinely as I could and refer to the real and substantive issues within the organisation others and I were grappling with. I showed my colleague this account. I then made a serious, unwitting error of judgement. I sent the account to my PhD supervisor at Bath University and also to a colleague at another University, without first checking with the organisation that it would be acceptable to do this. My colleague read my account and made some theoretical written comments giving her perspective on how I had worked with self-organising processes in this organisation. I then sent this account to two people within the organisation I had good relationships with and had worked closely with, and included the comments of my colleague because I thought they were interesting and insightful. I wanted to ask their opinion about whether my account enhanced their learning about processes of change within organisations and also whether they thought this account could, if suitably amended, be placed in the public domain. I then met with the two people concerned to discuss my account. It rapidly became clear to me that in sending this account to two people outside the organisation I had breached confidentiality. Internal organisational procedures were initiated and my involvement with the organisation was ended.

I refer to this incident not just to confess my naivety and foolish lack of appreciation of important organisational concerns around confidentiality but also to illustrate some of the political and ethical issues involved in the way I was conducting this approach to action research. I was deeply immersed in a discourse concerned with learning, sharing that learning selectively with others in dialogue, and developing both knowledge and working relationships through this. I was unforgivingly unrecognising of another important discourse, and its consequences, concerned with appropriate professional

behaviour, confidentiality, and reputation. And the latter discourse was the most powerful.

Now, at the time of writing, I have made one further foray into sending accounts of my work to others involved in it. In February 2001, I ran a one-day session on facilitation skills for another MSc programme in 'People and Organisational Development'. I felt very satisfied with this day, as I believed it suitably addressed the multiple levels of facilitating issues in this group, demonstrating facilitation in action, providing opportunities for others to facilitate, and learning about the process of facilitation. I sent this account to the participants on this programme and received one response only.

My main conclusion from carrying out this activity so far is a further demonstration of the significance of relational context. In situations where I had more ongoing and developed relationships with others, my written reflections generated a meaningful response. In other situations, others either had no appreciation of the context in which I was writing to them and/or did not have the time, interest or emotional investment to respond. And in the situation where I breached confidentiality, I grossly misread the context through holding the assumption that I was operating in a different context that could give a different meaning to my actions apart from breaking confidentiality. I also think I underestimated the potency of my account of work with this organisation in evoking strong defensive and protective reactions."

Section six: further work, May 2001 - September 2002

In May 2001, I began work on the second part of my autobiographical writings, entitled 'My second twenty one years', largely dealing with the time in my life when I had trained and practised as a psychotherapist. I sent this writing to the woman who had trained and supervised me. Her overall response was to rebut my account, claim that it was defamatory, and make a number of key points to counter my writing. I responded by changing my account with regard to some of the points she made, and took out as much identifying detail as I could. I sent her this amended version. She replied in a brief letter that "the picture presented is a distortion of the truth" and also that "I trust you have sought legal advice about defamation and the implications of the recently introduced Human Rights legislation".

I took legal advice and further changed my account to take out or alter the passages that I had been advised were most at risk of being seen as defamatory, whilst at the same

time trying not to change or dilute the overall thrust of what I wanted to say. I also decided to publish this third amended version on my web-site, but with limited access via a password only, in order to give protected entry to the more autobiographical and personal nature of the web-site, and to minimise any risk of being sued for defamation. This autobiographical account, together with reflections on its writing and impact, are included in chapter five

In October 2001, I created a space of three weeks apart from my day-to-day work to write a major theoretical paper on 'ideas of the self'. I saw this paper bringing together notions of the self that I was exploring in theory, through various readings, and in practice, through evolving a more relationally based practice in which I understood myself to be embedded in, created by, and sustaining a network of relationships. This paper forms chapter three of the thesis. The thinking behind this paper then led me to write another related paper on assumptions about organisational change which is included in appendix one.

In January 2002, I started work with a new cohort of seventeen participants as Programme Director for a two year part-time MSc in People and Organisation Development at Roffey Park. I saw this programme as a good opportunity to develop my inquiry practice further. I had already experimented with previous cohorts on the programme in writing about aspects of the programme, sending my accounts to participants on the programme, and receiving their responses. I now had the benefit of learning from the accumulated experience so far of showing and sending my work to others. I also had the opportunity to do this from the beginning of a two-year programme, which would allow my inquiry to unfold over time and also develop alongside the inquiries of the participants on the programme. A detailed account of work with this MSc programme is given in chapter seven.

The last stage of my inquiry practice was to distribute this draft thesis to my supervisor and a number of other people, including colleagues at Roffey Park, peers on the CARPP programme, students on the current MSc programme at Roffey Park, and family and friends. This was a further and final iteration of the process I have described as 'showing my work to others', and was earlier described in the introduction.

Section seven: inquiry methods

This chapter so far, through describing the different phases of my research, necessarily includes questions of methodology. Before going on in the next chapter to look at different ways of accounting for my research, I want to draw out and indicate here, at least in outline, the different methods that have informed my inquiries.

Initially, as outlined in the first phase of my research, my primary inquiry method was a journal. I kept this for three years. I did not attempt to write this regularly at a prescribed interval, say, each week, but used the journal to track my feelings and thoughts about what I experienced as significant incidents in my life. Also, during some of this period, I was experiencing what Frank (1995) calls a 'chaos narrative' – that is, I was unable to make coherent sense of what was happening to me – and that precluded writing the journal in regular, prescribed intervals.

This journal, in the next phase of research, shifted to include accounts of work I had undertaken. At this stage, I was trying to write about my work in a way that integrated a narrative description of the work, references to relevant theoretical material, and my personal context and feelings at the time. During this time, I also tape recorded conversations from the supervision group I was part of and transcribed these in my journal.

The next evolution of my methodology was to show my accounts of work to others, and create a web-site to both make my writings accessible to others and explore the non-linear forms of representation offered by the new web-based technology. During this period, I also taped and transcribed conversations with participants at the end of post-graduate programmes about my influence on their learning over the two years of the programme.

It is worth at this stage reviewing the creation and usage of the web-site. At the time of its inception, I thought it would be an innovative and exciting way of taking my research forward, which promised much in the way of new learning possibilities. My experience has been that these possibilities have not been realised. On reflection, I think this is for two main reasons.

Firstly, I underestimated the work and financial investment involved in creating a complex, sophisticated, user-friendly site. I soon realised that building an innovative web-site, making extensive use of the creative non-linear possibilities of hyper-text and

other features of the web, was a thesis and almost an occupation in itself. This was not a task that I wanted to continue to devote large amounts of time, energy and money to.

Secondly, the 'traffic' on my site was lower than I had hoped for. I had overestimated other peoples' interest and time available to read material on my site. Also, I did not have a specialised interactive facility to allow the site to help develop conversations between people. At the same time, I was experimenting in other working contexts with using electronic based discussion groups and finding here, too, that people did not make use of them. I spoke with people working in the field of on-line learning. They told me that conventional wisdom was that on-line education in the form of discussion groups mostly only worked satisfactorily if it was made mandatory for students to use electronic media.

On the other hand, the web-site did help by serving as a focus for my work and inspired me to write more. It also did do what I had hoped for in a minor way. I occasionally received emails and comments from unknown people who had found their way to the site without direction from me. One of these was particularly encouraging. It said:

"That was the most interesting thing I have read for ages. I have just left an organisation after 10 years due to intolerable working conditions. I have suffered ill health and been at the lowest I could imagine. Power wields in many forms; the kindness of management can actually be overbearing and suffocating. Having rebelled and flipped in what can only be described as an abusive manner I am now persona non-grata. My superiors have been like Victorian Fathers/Husbands my rejection of their 'kindness' has led them to vehemently reject me. Your writings on the net were the only things that seemed to understand where I was coming from. I am sure I am a part of the problem, but when I have admitted this instead of being met half way, I have been perceived as all the more manipulable. No-one has ever admitted they got their management style wrong. I look forward to reading more of your stuff on the net."

I also received one much less affirmative response briefly stating:

"Your page particularly the quotes has become cynical."

As I began to receive less response from the web-site than I had anticipated, I started to withdraw energy from it. I then mainly used it to continue to post work I had written, but no longer experimented with non-linear forms of representation.

At the same time as creating the web-site, I more consciously experimented with autoethnography as a research method. This was through writing two major autobiographical accounts to trace out and make more explicit the ways in which key events in my life had shaped my practice and how I thought about my practice.

The latter phases of my research, in working with a group of post-graduate students undertaking an MSc in People and Organisational Development, has been to try and situate my inquiry alongside their inquiries. Whilst this has not technically been a form of co-operative inquiry, as Reason (1994) would define it, I have aimed to build collaboration, and initiate short-term joint inquiries such as: “How does a design group of participants, together with me as the Programme Director, work collaboratively to create residential events together?” In this phase, I have evolved what I consider to be a unique form of participative inquiry, inquiring ‘alongside’ others (DeLong, 2002), tailored to my particular working contexts and emerging from the history of my research practices.

Finally, I would see the act of writing itself, especially exemplified in the writing of the draft and its current redrafting, as an important research method. Both Atkinson (2000) and Richardson (2000) argue for the positioning of writing, not as a way of reporting data or theories already known, but as an active form of knowing and knowledge construction in its own right. In addition, having circulated the draft thesis to others, who constitute the different networks of relationships or, in Wenger’s (1998) terms, ‘communities of practice’ I am involved with - my family, colleagues and my boss at work, my supervisor, members of my PhD supervision group, other participants on the CARPP programme, recent contacts at the ninth ‘emerging inquiries conference’ – has been a further and final iteration of the method I have evolved of showing my work to others.

Having outlined the different methods of my inquiry practice, I want to consider, in the next chapter, the question of how, in addition to the account given in this section, my work can be represented.

Chapter Two

Accounting for my practice

Section one: reflections on chapter one

The previous chapter offers an overview of my research in the form of a historical account with developmental overtones as it describes the thesis from birth to maturity. This is one possible form of giving an overall account, of making sense, of the processes of my inquiries. It has the merit of showing how the research has unfolded over time. It thereby illustrates Winter's (1998) point, in comparing action research with conventional social scientific inquiry which aims to discover general, timeless truths, that:

"For action research, in contrast, time is a friend. The progress of one's inquiry over time – noting what happens as different things occur, as the situation develops: all this is essential to the learning process." (p. 63).

The account is able to locate the evolution of different phases of inquiry at different times, and indicate how one phase is connected to and emerges from another. It offers a logical, chronological framework, which is helpful for the initial purposes of organising this thesis, in situating different parts of my writing, which were composed at different times, within an overview and easily understandable shared frame of reference.

Yet, the account in chapter one was not easy to write. Partly, this was because in writing it, I was traversing my recent history and re-reading in my journal accounts of events from the past six years, which contain and re-awaken painful memories. Also, even as I wrote it, I was concerned that I might be creating an account which, to quote the overview of my PhD on my web-site, by,

"Omitting the significance of context colludes with the denial of certain aspects of personal, political and ecological reality and privileges a more rational, linear, explanatory, imaginatively barren, and politically neutral account of organisational life."

In response to turning my own critique above upon the account in chapter one, I would argue that, even with the traditional, explanatory historical account of chapter one, I

have included aspects of personal context that would normally be excluded. In addition, I recognise that, of course, any account, chronological or otherwise, will be necessarily partial, incomplete, and, will privilege some features rather than others. What I am aiming for eventually is to produce a multi-layered account of my inquiries, to create movement, inter-connection and cross-referencing within the thesis that adds dimensions of richness and complexity to this initial starting point to give the text what Lather (1993) calls 'rhizomatic validity'. (This will be further elaborated in chapter nine) In short, and in other words, to create what Geertz (1973) would call a 'thick description' of my inquiries, or Denzin (1997), following Marcus (1994), would describe as a 'messy text'.

Section two: my writing as case study

Writing this thesis poses many challenges. How to account for and represent the meaning I have made, and now make, of the different inquiries that have shaped my research? What kind of shifts of practice and enhanced areas of professional capability can I claim to make over the period of this research? What have I learnt from the activities of the past six years? These challenges are epistemological and aesthetic as well as personal.

In posing the third question in the above paragraph about learning, I am en route to articulating an insight that has slowly germinated in me as I have sat down to create this thesis. This insight is the, (now rather blindingly obvious!), conclusion that what I am grappling with is how to account for my learning in the past six years. This question is of interest not only from a personal standpoint. As my work is centrally concerned with aiding the learning and development of others, (whether as individuals, teams and organisations), then in studying and reflecting upon the processes of my own learning over time, I may gain insight and be able to put forward more general ideas about how others learn too.

In posing this question about my own learning, and considering its relevance and applicability to how others learn, and what this therefore implies for my practice as an educator and developer of others, I necessarily become engaged in creating a particular kind of theory of learning and development, grounded in my own life and practice. This is what I understand Jack Whitehead (1993) would describe as my own "living educational theory". Such a 'living educational theory' is attended to and more fully articulated in chapter seven of this thesis.

I also want to draw on Simon's (1996) work here, from her paper entitled 'The paradox of case study', in which she argues for the validity of case study as a research method. She claims that, "by studying the uniqueness of the particular we come to understand the universal." In support of this, she also cites Macdonald and Walker's (1975) comments on case study as the 'way of the artist' where they state;

"Case study is the way of the artist, who achieves greatness when, through the portrayal of a single instance locked in time and circumstance, he communicates enduring truths about the human condition." (p. 3).

Whilst I am not wanting to make the inflated claim that my thesis will communicate "enduring truths about the human condition", I will want to claim for my thesis, that through offering accounts of my practice, reflecting on these accounts and linking them together, it is possible to create valid knowledge. I see this as an example of what Lyotard (1979) might call a 'modest narrative'. Whilst this knowledge arises from and is situated in my particular circumstances and context, it can also be valid for others, in the sense that they can engage in it and learn from it. In fact, one test of this thesis will be its capacity to generate learning and knowledge for others. This point will be returned to during a fuller discussion of validity in chapter nine.

Simon argues that the creation of a case study, if well done, has a similar power to that of art in challenging us to see situations freshly. For her, and for this thesis too, the point of social scientific research is not so much to offer solutions but to stimulate thinking. I doubt, therefore, that people reading this thesis will find ready-made solutions to their own complex unique work-based or life issues, but my intention is that their thinking about themselves and their practice will be stimulated through engaging in the accounts and sense-making I offer.

Towards the end of her paper, Simon discusses the paradoxical nature of case study. It is precisely because case study is paradoxical and resists easy resolution that, like the art of Magritte, or a Zen koan, it does not allow the mind to settle on the familiar and habitual but encourages it to think again. As Proust (2002) said: "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but in seeing with new eyes." Near the end of her paper, Simon concludes:

“Paradox is the point of case study. Living with paradox is crucial to understanding. The tension between the study of the unique and the need to generalise is necessary to reveal both the unique and the universal and the unity of that understanding. To live with ambiguity, to challenge certainty, to creatively encounter, is to arrive, eventually at ‘seeing’ anew.” (p. 238).

I find this discussion of paradox noteworthy. It is the same features of tension, ambiguity and contradiction, which are embodied in paradox, that Simon refers to, that I have found useful in structuring the thinking about ideas of the self that appears in the next chapter of this thesis. These same features too characterise the nature of the conditions described by complexity theorists as ‘the edge of chaos’ (Waldrop, 1994) - conditions which are believed to lead to learning, creativity, change and evolution. The significance of paradox will also be further discussed in chapter eight.

Section three: questions of representation

To return to one of the questions posed at the beginning of the previous section: how do I account for and represent the changes in my practice in the six years I have been actively inquiring into it? This is not just a purely personal question and challenge but touches on the profound epistemological issue that Denzin (1997) and Ken Gergen (1999) refer to as the ‘crisis of representation’, brought about by the challenges of post-structural thinking to the correspondence theories of language. (A fuller examination of the nature of this challenge will be given in the next chapter.)

One potential, and tempting, form of representation is what Lather (1993) refers to as a ‘victory narrative’, and which forms the basis of many published accounts of individual and organisational change. When I began my PhD, I hoped for and longed to be able to create a ‘victory narrative’. I envisaged the final form of my PhD being able to tell a story, which would link the themes of complexity theory, archetypal psychology, sustainable development and my daily practice into a seamless and innovative whole. In doing this, I would become established as a successful consultant working in the area of organisational change and sustainable development and simultaneously forever banish the sense of lack of purpose, anxiety, and associated sleeplessness, that intermittently accompany my work. Yet, at the end of this six-year period, I still suffer from sleepless nights, question the overall purpose and validity of my work, and experience the seasonally based cyclical pattern of periods of spring flatness and autumnal creativity that has become increasingly recognisable and familiar to me. Furthermore, the shape of my

future work is taking a very different direction to the one envisaged six years ago, as I have become increasingly drawn to the possibility of doing VSO or other forms of international volunteer work.

So I cannot claim a simple 'victory narrative'. Neither am I writing, to use Lather's (1993) other evocative term, a 'narrative of ruin'. The overall motif of my story is neither heroic accomplishment nor tragedy, though it certainly could claim to have dimensions of both of these. During the early phases of my research, for example, as a result of my separation and divorce, I experienced, the 'ruin' caused by a profound, in Frank's (1995) notable phrase, 'narrative wreckage'. Over the period of the research as a whole, I have also experienced definite feelings of achievement in relation to my work and life as a whole.

Overall, in reviewing this nearly six year period in my life and making sense of my life journey, (to use an obvious and common metaphor), over this time, I am faced with the paradox, that the beginning and end of the 'journey' are both similar and different. There is change and there is persistence. This resonates with the four lines of Eliot's poem in the prologue. The cryptic lyrics of Bob Dylan's song 'Love Minus Zero' (1965) also come to mind. "She knows that there's no success like failure. And that failure's no success at all."

In re-reading and re-thinking the different accounts over the six years of my research inquiries, I can see that clearly some changes have occurred whilst simultaneously some issues, for example my insomnia, have remained the same. The immediate question that surfaces is how to account for the changes – but re-framing the question to account for the stability of certain patterns, especially in the face of, (for example, my insomnia), repeated attempts to change the pattern, is equally testing. We are habitually accustomed to try to explain and understand change yet stability and persistence are potentially equally mysterious. This is an example of the paradoxical nature of identity and difference, continuity and transformation, which forms a key theme in the work of Ralph Stacey, Doug Griffin and Patricia Shaw (2000), discussed in chapter eight.

Whilst recognising that my practice has unfolded and evolved over time, and has included feelings of achievement, I hesitate to make the all-encompassing claim that it is better now than it was six years ago. I want to avoid falling into the deeply rooted enlightenment-based set of assumptions that changes over time are following some form of linear, staged, development towards a progressively higher stage of evolution. Such a

view of change and rationally based progress has become western culture's central, dominant 'victory narrative'. For this reason, and for others outlined in the following chapter, I have become wary of using the word 'development' to characterise my work - though I am conventionally described as working in management and organisational development - as it seems very difficult to free it from its associations with linear progress, ever onwards and upwards.

In thus rejecting conventional, linear, stage-based models of development to explain and represent this overall account, for example Torbert (1995) or Wilber (2001), the challenge still persists of how to represent the movement of my thinking and practice over time. At this stage, this can still only continue to be raised as a question. It cannot be answered a priori. The unfolding of the writing culminating in the eventual form of the thesis will necessarily offer an answer.

This points to the important notion, touched on at the end of chapter one. Rather than the thesis representing the writing up of a body of knowledge that exists and has been created independently of its representation in this writing, the process of writing, as Atkinson's (2000) article claims, "has become a form of research in itself, and that this research, in turn, has become a form of reflective practice." In so doing, I notice as I write, that this form of reflective practice then spontaneously feeds my future practice. To give a recent example: in writing the draft thesis, I had a number of consciously unsolicited ideas about how to organise a session on postmodernism and research methods that I led in mid-November 2002 on a postgraduate programme.

In her article, Atkinson goes on to make a comment about research as writing that is highly pertinent to this thesis.

"The research here lies not in what I did or what I found, or even how I interpreted what I found, but in the shifting and transforming knowledge engineered by the process of critical thought and writing. At the point of writing, it is the critical dialogue with myself and within myself which drives my knowledge forward." (P. 160).

Similarly, Richardson (2000) describes the process of writing itself as a 'method of inquiry' and as an additional, or alternative, research practice.

To help further this exploration of representation, sense-making and accounting for my practice, I will turn next to the two inter-related fields of action research and theories of learning. The following two sections of this chapter are not an attempt to give a comprehensive overview of these respective fields, but more to locate my research within particular theoretical perspectives on and traditions in learning and action research.

Section four: action research

In his opening words on 19th September 2002 to outline his view of action research at the '9th emerging approaches to inquiry' conference held at Hawkwood, Peter Reason commented that "there is no difference between action research and life processes." He went on to describe action research as "a way of living life", and pointed to the work of Judi Marshall (1999, 2001) and Torbert (2001) as particular exemplars of this tradition within action research. Working in a similar tradition, Geoff Mead, (2001), a colleague on the CARPP programme, has successfully completed his PhD, basing his thesis on the notion of "realising my scholarship of living inquiry".

My thesis, like Geoff Mead's (2001), is also an example of 'living life as inquiry'. This form of inquiry has its own disciplines and rigour. As Judi Marshall (2001) states:

"Each person's inquiry approach will be distinctive, disciplines cannot be cloned or copied. Rather each person must identify and craft his or her own qualities and practices. The questioning then becomes how to do them well, how to conduct them with quality and rigour appropriate to their forms, and how to articulate the inquiry processes and sensemaking richly and non-defensively." (p. 433).

Chapter one outlines the evolution of my practices of self-reflective inquiry from the more introspective method of journal keeping to a more outer-directed approach of engaging others in my inquiry through sending people the reflections on my work with them and developing a web-site to make my research more public. The particular forms of my inquiry questions have evolved in the context of my life as a whole. These questions are not compartmentalised to a separate professional area of my life – they are deeply embedded in my psyche and the questions shift simultaneously with the movement of my psyche and 'life-world'.

I have also indicated, in the prologue, how the activity of running and daily exercise, over time, has become an increasingly conscious and disciplined form of meditative practice. Some of my best ideas come unbidden whilst running. The discipline of this practice is aimed, rather ambitiously, at developing my presence through increasing my sense of physical, bodily self-awareness and, more modestly, at the benefits and pleasures of physical exercise.

Turning now, more broadly, to the overall field of action research, Peter Reason and Bradbury (2001) point to the plurality of approaches and practices constituting action research, (of which 'living life as inquiry' is one), and the range of paradigms and epistemologies underpinning it. They describe action research as "a family of approaches to inquiry which are participative, grounded in experience, and action oriented". (p. xxiv).

Thinking about these dimensions of action research in relation to my own work, my inquiries over time have become increasingly participative in the form of practice they have taken. Even when at their most introspective and potentially solipsistic, they are underpinned by a view of self that is participatively co-created in its relations and interactions with others. Likewise, I have wanted to ground my research in the actual experience of my practice, to discover my own unique way of theorising about the relationship between theory and practice as it applies to my work. My research is action oriented in that it is seeking both to develop both my own practice and also to effect the network of relationships or 'communities of practice' in which my inquiries are situated.

Within the plurality and diversity of approaches to action research, Peter Reason and Bradbury (2001) identify "three broad pathways" of first, second and third person research/practice.

First person practice is described as:

'The ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act with awareness and to choose carefully and to assess effects in the outside world of acting. First person research practice brings inquiry into more and more of our moments of action – not as outside researchers but in the whole range of everyday activities.'

My research as described in this thesis is an example of first person research. It is inseparably linked to my life. I have wanted to make the connections between the evolving forms of my inquiries and my life more transparent, to be able to inquire and write in a way that, as Denzin (1997) puts it, makes “public that which modernism kept hidden and repressed”. I am aiming, as I say in the web-based overview of my PhD, to demonstrate the point that all thinking and inquiry is contextual by situating my own thinking autobiographically, socially, politically, culturally and geographically.

In doing this, I have subverted and blurred traditional boundaries between the personal, the professional and the political. I have faced the unexpected consequences of this. This has been in, at times, heated and, at other times, more good-natured argument with my supervisor about the boundaries between education and therapy. More seriously, this has also resulted in two instances I have already mentioned. One was being thrown out of a valued and professionally significant client-system I had been working in over a sustained period of fifteen months, and losing the relationships and the economic revenue I had carefully built up. The other instance was of being informed that the autobiographical account of my psychotherapy training was potentially defamatory. Both these instances dramatically illustrate a comment that Peter Reason made in his opening address to the ninth ‘approaches to emerging inquiry’ conference. He said, of action research, that; “when it gets real”, it gets dangerous.” This echoes Foucaults’ argument about praxis needing to be dangerous to be valuable and for it to be based on the Graeco-Roman tradition of parrhesia or ‘truth-telling’ (Flynn, 1994). I have tried to make the consequences of such potentially dangerous ‘truth-telling’ the further subject of my inquiries, and, through reflecting on the unpredictable outcomes generated by these responses, engage in additional cycles of action and reflection.

In choosing to write this thesis, mostly, in the first person, and in the tradition of first-person inquiry, I am, in Jack Whitehead’s (1993) terms placing the ‘I’ at the centre of my inquiry. My thesis also instantiates what Denzin (1997) says about qualitative research. It “discovers what has always been known: we are our own subjects. How our subjectivity becomes entangled in the lives of others is and has always been our topic.” Whilst agreeing with the thrust of what Denzin is saying here, I explore in the next chapter how our subjectivity itself emerges from and is co-constituted in this entanglement with others. Alongside thinking of this thesis as a ‘messy text’ (Marcus, 1994) and/or a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) and/or in terms of the metaphor of a patchwork quilt, it can also be seen as the account of many entanglements.

Writing mainly in the first person raises an immediate objection in my mind. How do I know that my thesis will not be irretrievably self-obsessed and self-absorbed, and of no interest or value to anyone beyond myself? This objection is partly answered by the earlier discussion in this chapter about the value of an in-depth case study offering insights and knowledge that can be generalised. It will be more fully explored in the discussion of validity and quality in chapter nine.

A further issue raised through the attempt to contextualise my research, to locate it in my life, is the impossibility of doing this in an exhaustive way. My account, as already indicated, is necessarily partial, incomplete, and selective. Why, for example, did I refer in my opening lines in the prologue to September 11th and global warming but not the current policies of the New Labour Government? How do I know whether I am picking out the key or most significant features of context? The answer to this is that I do not and cannot. Complexity theory shows the impossibility of tracing direct cause and effect linkages in any complex adaptive system.

In emphasising the first person nature of my inquiries, and also agreeing with Judi Marshall's (1999) philosophy of 'living life as inquiry', the question is raised as to how inquiry, in that case, is different from life. What have I been doing in the last six years that is different from just living my life and going about my daily work as a consultant and educator? I have two main responses to this question. The first is that my inquiry practice has taken forms that would not normally have been an intrinsic dimension of my professional and personal life – this includes journal writing, reflective writing on different work projects, and, especially, evolving as part of my practice, sharing my writing with others. The second response, of which the first is the embodiment, is the definition of research, which is offered within the title of Skilbeck's (1983) article that, "research is systematic inquiry made public". It is the public sharing of accounts of my practice and writings that enables me to make a distinction between my research and my life, whilst at the same time claiming that they are completely bound up with one another.

My research cannot, however, be subsumed entirely under the first person category. Peter Reason and Bradbury (2001) define second person research as addressing "our ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern, for example in the service of improving our professional practice both individually and separately. Second-person inquiry starts with interpersonal dialogue and includes the development of communities of inquiry and learning organisations". (p. xxvi).

This is the form of inquiry that is most embodied in the work I have been doing with successive cohorts of postgraduate students on the MSc programme in People and Organisational Development at Roffey Park, which is more fully described in chapter seven of this thesis.

Third person research is concerned, according to Peter Reason and Bradbury (2001), with building strategies to “create a wider community of inquiry involving persons who, because they cannot be known to each other face-to-face (say, in a large geographically dispersed corporation, have an impersonal quality. Writing and other reporting of the process and outcomes of inquiries can also be an important form of third-person inquiry.” (p. xxvi).

Part of my aim in designing and building a web-site was to create the possibility of more third person inquiry practice. Although, in general, as I have explored, I do not consider the web-site to have been hugely successful, one of its benefits and satisfactions was receiving the occasional unsolicited mail from someone who had come across the site offering their comments, both favourable and critical, on my work.

I am arguing here for my research to be considered as its own unique form of integrated first, second, and third person research fulfilling Peter Reason and Bradbury’s point that “the most compelling and enduring kind of research will engage all three strategies.”

In a recent draft paper, Judi Marshall (2002) has enriched her view of first person action research and ‘living life as inquiry’ by linking them to the notion of ‘living systemic thinking.’ In this paper, she explores both theoretically, and through an example, what it means to live systemic thinking. She says;

“Thinking systemically, to me, includes: often holding in mind ideas of connectedness, system properties and dynamics, persistence of patterns, and resilience; respecting emergence and unfolding process; believing that often parts cannot change unless there is some kind of shift in system pattern, but/and that sometimes parts can change and influence change in the wider system; and it means typically experiencing oneself as part of any system I am seeking to understand, not apart.” (p. 1)

In a similar vein, I offer this account of my research as my attempt to ‘live systemic thinking’. I have over time, come to understand - and my intention is that this thesis will

embody this - the thrust of my research as exploring what it means in theory and practice to live out a relational, network-based, systemic view of the self.

I have, so far, unsurprisingly - as they have influenced me the most - used predominantly the thinking about action research of the teachers on the CARPP programme. Turning now very briefly to a description of action research by Winter (1998), he says that “action research is about seeking one’s voice, an authentic voice, a voice with which to speak one’s experience and one’s ability to learn from that experience.” It is the challenge of this thesis to find my ‘authentic voice’, or ‘voices’, (as I prefer and which will be elaborated in the next chapter), which includes finding a unique representational form – the theme that this chapter is articulating and circling round. Winter, too, in the above outline description of action research, makes explicit the link with learning, which will be the subject of the next section.

Section five: theories of learning

As I indicated earlier in this chapter, beginning, over the summer of 2002, to mull over my overall thesis led me to realise that the overall course of my practice these last six years, and my writings about this, potentially constitute a theory of learning. Despite my already stated reservations about writing a ‘victory narrative’, the thesis make some claims about the nature of my learning over time. I don’t believe that over six years I have learnt nothing – that would indeed be a remarkable ‘narrative of ruin’. I will continue by indicating a number of different perspectives on learning that are helpful in clarifying and articulating the nature of the learning that I have been engaged in.

The first of these is Connelly and Clandin’s (1995,1999) metaphor of a ‘professional knowledge landscape’. In looking at how teachers become knowers - of themselves, their situations, their practice and their learning - they say, (1999), echoing my own views of context-dependent knowledge, that “they realised that knowledge was both formed and expressed in context.” Like many others in an action research tradition, they are interested in practical, rather than traditional, abstract propositional forms of knowing. In their case, this is how teachers acquire the practical knowledge that shapes their practice and defines their identities as teachers, and enables them to accomplish what Schon (1983), writing of professionals in general, calls ‘artistry-in-action’. This notion of different forms of knowing is an important one and will be elaborated further in chapter nine in the section on epistemology.

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) suggest that:

“Understanding professional knowledge as comprising a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things. Because we see the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places and things, we see it as both an intellectual and a moral landscape.” (p. 4-5).

Connelly and Clandin (1999) see this landscape as, like all landscapes, existing over time and “having a history with moral, emotional and aesthetic dimensions”. In addition, and as further elaborated in the next chapter, this professional knowledge landscape is constructed and expressed in the form of stories, what they call ‘stories to live by’.

I warm to this idea of a knowledge landscape. It suggests a sophisticated, subtle, more interdependent, notion of knowledge and learning that has an ecological sensibility, in which knowing, context and identity are deeply bound up with one another, in contrast with more instrumental ideas of knowledge existing independently of the knower and their life situation. Such a view of a ‘professional knowledge landscape’, coupled with postmodern critiques of traditional privileged forms of knowledge and knowing, has encouraged me to include references to poems, talks, songs, films and novels in this thesis. As I indicated in the prologue, reading Ian Mckewn’s (2002) novel ‘Atonement’, and his cleverly worked questioning of the authority and agency of authorship, stimulated my thinking about this thesis just as much as any theoretical work on postmodernism. It will also encourage me to include aspects of my relationships with the living people I know whose ideas appear in this text as they, too, are significant aspects of my knowledge landscape. Otherwise, they would be included in this thesis only as a few disembodied lines of reference in the bibliography. In fact, I have already begun to refer to authors that I know by using their first as well as their surname.

From this perspective, then, the thesis is a description of the evolution of my current ‘professional knowledge landscape’. This landscape is not fixed, but like any landscape, is different according to from where it is experienced. Although I was writing this part of the thesis over a period of three months, from October to December 2002, to lend my landscape at that time stability and apparent solidity, it is forever changing, being actively and constantly revised as I write, liable to revert from order to chaos, and open to significant amendment and transformation as it both unfolds and encounters subsequent experiences. Accounting for this knowledge landscape involves situating it in time,

showing its connection to the stories and accounts that are part of it, and giving an indication of the key experiences and cultural influences that have shaped it and continue to shape it. That is the primary reason why the autobiographical material is included in Chapter five.

Another body of theory about learning which recognises the interweaving of learning, meaning, identity and context is the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) on 'situated learning' and Wenger (1998) on 'communities of practice.' Lave and Wenger provide a rigorously social and practice-based theory of learning. They do not see learning as the internalised acquisition of propositional knowledge by separate, autonomous individuals. Instead they see learning arising from the improvised activity and lived experience of individuals participating in their social worlds, from, therefore, being socially and culturally situated in time and place. Hence their notion of 'situated learning'. This implies, in their words (1991), an "emphasis on comprehensive understanding involving the whole person rather than "receiving" a body of factual knowledge about the world; on activity in and with the world; and on the view that agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute one another."

This view fits very well with the perspective outlined in section four of the next chapter. This section, like Lave and Wenger (1991), also theorises a relationally based self, in which self, other, and the world co-create one another.

This importantly suggests, as Hanks foreword to 'Situated Learning' (1991) says, in resonance with Judi Marshall's (1999) philosophy of 'living life as inquiry', that 'learning is a way of being in the social world, not a way of coming to know about it.' Such a view makes no distinction between ontology and epistemology. Being and knowing are inseparable. This is a profound challenge to the Cartesian epistemology which has dominated western thinking since the seventeenth century in which the knower, the world and the process of knowing and learning are conceived of as separate activities, and which gives pre-eminence to rational cognitive processes of learning and knowing. This theme will be taken up again in chapter nine.

This view also locates learning in the social processes or what Wenger (1998) later called 'communities of practice' that individuals participate in. As Wenger says:

"We all belong to communities of practice. At home, at work, at school, in our hobbies - we belong to several communities of practice at any given time. And the communities of practice to which we belong change over the course of our lives. In fact, communities of practice are everywhere."

From this perspective, this thesis is an account of my ongoing relationship with the various 'communities of practice' I am involved with and the effect of the interventions I have made in those communities by sharing my written reflections about aspects of my participation in these communities. These communities and networks include; a family-based community of my two ex-wives, sons, parents, sister and her family; a Roffey Park Institute community of peers and my boss; the community of people I have engaged with through participating in the CARPP PhD programme; the different communities of participants and staff that have formed different cohorts of the two year part-time postgraduate programme in People and Organisational Development at Roffey Park; the organisational community of the client organisation I was stopped from working with due to breach of confidentiality; various temporary communities on courses at Schumacher College; the historical grouping who were part of the psychotherapy training and supervision practice I refer to as 'the Community' in Chapter four; the community of people I grew up with in my adolescence in Upminster. In section five of the next chapter, I will argue, too, that what we call ourself is actually not a singular self but made up of plurality of different selves including imaginal and imaginary others, akin to an internal 'community of practice' in conversation and dialogue with one another. So, to return to the point made by Atkinson (2000) in the previous section of this chapter, writing this thesis is a continuing engagement and dialogue between aspects and members of that internal community, the results of which are then placed in the public domain.

The point about learning I am leading towards here follows exactly Lave and Wenger (1991). My learning is deeply rooted in my participation in these diverse communities, and this thesis represents the learning that has emerged from this participation.

Section six: a dialogical postscript

How was that last chapter?

Well, if the first was difficult to write, that was more so.

Why was that?

I think it's partly to do with the complexity and inter-relatedness of the ideas I am grappling with. Partly, also, the frustration and tension common to any writing where I am struggling to articulate my ideas, find an 'authentic voice' and not fall into what I see as traditional, academic writing emphasising abstract propositional knowledge, whilst at the same time, because this is a PhD thesis giving due weight to academic standards and conventions.

So how much of that last chapter was 'authentic'?

Well, of course, that prefigures a debate about the nature of authenticity, which will be held in the next chapter. It leads into the social constructionist and postmodern critique of overly, individualistically focussed humanistic notions of authenticity and associated notions of the romantic self. And, also, what criteria are we using to delineate 'authenticity'? If I had supplied more of the gritty emotional details of the 'narrative wreckage' referred to in the previous chapter, would that have been more authentic? What is the genre or discourse, which is attempting to define authenticity here?

I thought I was asking the questions?

You were. The form is shifting. There are not just two voices at work here with simple rules that one asks the questions and the other responds.

Oh I get it. You are trying to do this in a multi-voiced way to create a different representational form for your thesis. And show what you called in section five of this chapter your internal 'community of practice' at work. Very clever (supposedly). Who are you trying to impress?

I see the 'critic/cynic' has made his entry. This voice is well-known to me. He will appear more strongly later in the thesis in chapter four when he offers his review of Jaworski's book on 'Synchronicity'. William Blake spoke about this critical aspect of the psyche, seeing it as an internalised destructive feature of the industrial age. Others have named it as 'the internal critic', seeing it responsible for the corrosion of self-esteem.

Didn't you miss the references to Jaworski and Blake there?

I wondered if it was possible to write this short section without academic references.

Why?

Because as soon as I bring referencing in, that suggests a style of writing I think of as 'academic', which leads me to be constrained in my writing as I try to conform to what I perceive to be the demands and protocols of that style.

Poor thing. Did the little Gollum lose its precious authentic voice?

Now you are turning nasty. You remind me of Michael Foot's famous description of Norman Tebbit as an "untrained polecat."

Shouldn't you reference that too?

And how do we know that you are not making that phrase up?

Oh I see. You are trying to bring in the question of valid knowledge and link it to the chapter on epistemology and validity.

Who are you?

I am the fourth voice. I could be described as the meta-voice or witnessing aspect of the psyche. Call me Geneva (after the type-face).

Very pretentious and overly self-referential don't you think? Or is this an example of 'transgressive validity' you are going to refer to later?

Who is the 'you' that you are asking there?

Isn't all this getting very tedious? I think you are losing the plot. And also wouldn't you be better doing this in colour rather than different type-faces?

You have two good points there. I guess the 'critic is not always simply destructive. In the Hindu tradition, creativity and destruction go together. To return to the point about authentic writing in this chapter. There are definitely points when the writing flowed and I felt that the crafting of the writing was more creative, something distinctive was emerging, and I was not just summarising or regurgitating others' opinions – this is what I would describe as an 'authentic voice'. And this voice was not separate from or opposed to the voice of more traditional academic writing. It drew on this voice and was clearly more than this voice. It is as if all the different voices are tributaries to a river and at times come together to flow or the voices are all speaking in different rhythms and occasionally their rhythms synchronise for short times. I connect this notion of authenticity to Jung's idea of individuation. This provides a further way of viewing the movement over time in this thesis as an individuating process. Jung saw individuation as the psyche's striving for wholeness, and in those instances of authentic writing, together with the embodied feelings of intellectual, imaginative and emotional excitement, the form and purpose of this thesis, which is constantly in flux, is glimpsed and becomes momentarily available in its current manifestation. When this happens it is wonderful and I understand why people like to and want to write. A few moments of that are worth a lot of graft and heart-ache.

Couldn't the whole thesis be like that?

I'm not sure. That would be very demanding. And I think some of the more traditional writing is necessary as a counter-point in order to allow the more creative fluent writing to emerge.

Part Two

Chapter Three

Ideas of the Self

If you're compelled to find some cause that causes everything you do – why, then, that something needs a name. You call it “me”. I call it “you.”

Minsky (1985)

Introduction

The last section of chapter two introduced and gave expression, through dialogue, to the different voices that surfaced after writing chapter two of this thesis

This chapter will offer the theoretical grounds for viewing the self as plural, diverse and multi-vocal (as demonstrated in the concluding part of chapter two) in contrast to more conventional ideas of the self which view the self as singular and uni-vocal. As well as the singular-plural polarity, the chapter will also examine three other polarities that are significant in understanding the nature of the self. These polarities are separate-relational, cognitive-embodied, and concrete-fictional. This chapter will assert that dominant views of the self, including both theoretical and popular understandings, emphasise and privilege the singular, separate, cognitive and concrete pole of the self. Such a view of the self is the basis of most conventional theory and practice in management and organisational development.

The following argument in this chapter will be written within the discourse and traditions of academic, propositional knowledge. Working within both the constraining and enabling contours of this discourse allows me to give expression to a particular voice. I refer to this as my ‘scholarly voice’. The work of this voice is expressed in the next eight sections. This voice, through its argumentation, serves to legitimate the existence of other voices. Whilst it will be the dominant voice in the following chapter, its aim is to clear the ground for the introduction and validation of other voices. These will be heard in the rest of the thesis.

Section 1. “The way we live now” - “not everything is about you” (or me)

We live in a western culture that promotes, champions and celebrates the individual self. We have inherited and actively perpetuate this tradition, which stresses the capacity and capability of self-determining individuals to use their own rationality in the exercise of freedom of choice. The revolutions and philosophers of the enlightenment, particularly Descartes, Locke and Kant, were pivotal in the development of this tradition through opposing the surrendering of individual viewpoint to the dogmatic predetermined views of the feudal structures of Church and State. Instead, individuals were seen to be both equal and free to make autonomous rational progressive decisions. This tradition of individual rationality is an important aspect of a combination of technological, economic, cultural and institutional features characterising western society which has been described as modernity (Giddens, 1990; Jameson 1984).

In recent decades, beginning primarily in the nineteen sixties, not only was this emphasis on the freedom of the individual self continually re-affirmed, but the individual was also to be freed from any further restrictions constraining its development and expression. Such restrictions were both external, in the form of social barriers and oppressive prejudicial definitions and practices, and internal, in the form of self-imposed limitations. Undoubtedly, much of this emphasis on the increased freedoms of the self is important, especially in the challenge to sexist and racist definitions and social practice. At the same time, this highly individualistic emphasis, characterised by Margaret Thatcher's notorious assertion that, “there is no such thing as society”, has other more problematic consequences and implications.

Some of these consequences are notably brought together by Christopher Lasch (1979), in his book ‘The Culture of Narcissism’. In this prophetic book, Lasch provides an analysis and critique of American society at the time he was writing, based on the concept of the ‘narcissistic’ personality type. In deliberately borrowing the word ‘narcissism’ from a clinical psychoanalytical tradition, Lasch uses it to mean a great deal more than basic selfishness and self-preoccupation, though those are two of its distinguishing features. He believes that the narcissistic personality is a mirror of our times – it reflects the dominant way in which he thinks society is reproduced in the individual personality. The narcissistic personality as a diagnostic category is described as; concerned with appearances, overly driven to impress others, both dependent on others for self validation, yet at the same time fearful and resentful of this dependence, and living with a sense of an impoverished inner life and a deeply repressed rage. A

further significant feature of the narcissistic personality for Lasch is their relationship with time. Lasch is deeply concerned by the exaggeration of a tendency he believes has always been part of American culture - a determination to throw off the yoke of an oppressive past, leading to a consequent denial of the past. He says:

“To live for the moment is the prevailing passion – to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity. We are fast losing the sense of historical continuity, the sense of belonging to a succession of generations originating in the past and stretching into the future. It is the waning of the sense of historical time – in particular the erosion of any strong concern for posterity – that distinguishes the spiritual crisis of the seventies from earlier outbreaks of millenarian religion, to which it bears a superficial resemblance.” (p. 5)

Lasch sees the development of narcissism as a prevailing pattern of personality organisation arising from the continuing relentless culture of competitive individualism coupled with a general crisis and malaise in western life. He was writing soon after the American defeat in the Vietnam War and before the recent much vaunted recovery and growth of the US economy and its domination of the new global economy. He also sees American society characterised by a decline in the key role of the family in socialisation and the increased dependence on the state and other organisations for child rearing and other social functions that formerly lay with the family and local community. Writing an afterword to his book in 1990, Lasch summarises the overall aim of ‘The Culture of Narcissism’ as an attempt to “explore the psychological dimension of long-term shifts in the structure of cultural authority.” (p. 238).

In an important overall statement about the changes he is writing about, Lasch says that:

“Economic man has himself given way to the psychological man of our times – the final product of bourgeois individualism. The new narcissist is haunted not by guilt but by anxiety. He seeks not to inflict his own certainties on others but to find a meaning in life.” (p. xvi).

Lasch’s work is significant, I believe, because he is making explicit the links between the workings of contemporary forms of capitalist social and economic organisation and the nature of the self that emerges in these conditions. He also demonstrates how new forms of emancipation couched in therapeutic language have their roots in historical traditions linked to the rise of the western liberal elite. He wants to show that the “contemporary climate is therapeutic not religious” (p. 7), and that, therefore, therapy is

replacing religion as the means to personal salvation. This form of salvation is defined very much in terms of individual self-fulfilment, which marks a withdrawal from the civic arenas of life and a retreat from the political struggles of the sixties, and dovetails well with the demands of consumer capitalism forever increasing expenditure.

Reading Lasch now, twenty-two years after the original publication of his book, much of his work still seems acutely relevant and uncannily prescient in anticipating and articulating certain cultural trends, which have become increasingly marked since 1979, the beginning in Britain of Margaret Thatcher's rule as Prime Minister. Others, too, have commented on these changes, notably the journalist Tom Wolfe (1982), who was seen to catch the mood of the whole decade in his description of the seventies as the "me decade". And the "me decade" did not end with the seventies. Offering an overview of recent decades in a very interesting leading article in the Financial Times Weekend section on November 3/4 2001, Richard Tomkins claims that: "By consensus, the 1980's was a decade of greed and excess". Although, at the end of the eighties, there were hopeful predictions made for a move away from the Gordon Gekko mentality of "greed is good", and a return to some of the sixties values in the nineties, what actually happened was that, according to Tomkins:

"Almost unremarked, the nineties turned into one of the most repulsively narcissistic decades in modern times. Even more than the 1980's, it was the "me" decade: the era of the atomised individual who was encouraged to believe the pursuit of self-interest was good because it was what made the market work most efficiently, and the market knew best."

Lasch's concerns have been taken up in a different way by the environmental movement, which has come into prominence since 1979. 'Green' economists echo his critique of a hedonistic living for the moment and emphasis on short-term satisfaction with no concern for the future or past by linking this to its powerful economic reinforcement through the quarterly reporting measures driving the global economy and resulting in environmental exploitation and degradation. In the report, entitled 'Our Common Future' (1987), of the World Commission on Environment and Development, which became known as the Brundtland Commission, sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present world without compromising future generations to meet their own needs." Similarly, Native American traditions are also often contrasted to the prevailing short-term, live-for-the-moment mentality, with their emphasis on taking decisions with the interests of the next seven generations in mind.

Following the events of September 11th 2001, there is a new and different crisis from the crises Lasch was writing about, evident in American and western confidence. Yet the signs of a deepening malaise were clearly present before this. Peggy Noonan, a former speech writer to Presidents Reagan and Bush Sr., and a respected Republican thinker, wrote a remarkably prescient article in 1998 which prophesied a terrorist attack on New York, which she calls “the city that is the psychological centre of our modernity, our hedonism, our creativity, our hard-shouldered hipness, our unthinking arrogance.” In this article, which appeared in The Times Review Section on October 16th 2001, she compares the lifestyle of wealthy America to living in “the gilded state-rooms of the Titanic.” Much contemporary serious American literature and film (for example, ‘American Beauty’, ‘The Pledge’) contains the theme of a profound festering anxiety and corruption at the heart of America, not so far below the surface of its brash economic confidence. In the beginning episode of the much acclaimed Sopranos TV series, Tony Soprano, the Head of the New Jersey Mafia, is talking about his panic attacks to his psychiatrist, Dr Melfi, in their first session together.

Tony Soprano: “It’s good to be in something from the ground floor. I came in too late for that, I know. But lately I’m getting the feeling that the best is over.”

Dr. Melfi: “Many Americans, I think, feel that way.”

Tony Soprano: “I think about my father. He never reached the heights like me. But in many ways he had it better. He had his people. They had their standards. They had pride. I tell you, what have we got?”

In A. M. Holmes latest novel (2000), ‘Music for Torching’, she offers a savage and insightful dissection of contemporary, affluent, alienated, intelligent, savvy, meaning-seeking, self pre-occupied, middle-class America. The book culminates in a terrible tragedy, aggravated by the narcissistic preoccupations of the leading character, whose wife is initially despairingly, and then with growing anger, asserting to him throughout the novel the phrase – “not everything is about you”.

Yet it is probably in the growth of the therapeutic sensibility, and its penetration into all aspects of cultural life, where Lasch’s writing appears most prescient. Self-development is very much in the ascendant. It has moved from the marginal fringes of the psychotherapy world and the back pages of the Sunday supplements to become embedded in mainstream culture. In fact it is now big business.

One of the main areas in which self-development has become more actively present is the workplace. Not so long ago, despite the dissemination and acceptance of work-related stress as an everyday and widespread occurrence, it was still considered stigmatising and potentially career-limiting at work to admit to suffering from stress - a sign of inability to cope. To admit to needing help to sort out stress related problems would not have been the sensible thing to do. Yet now, it is deemed perfectly acceptable for every self-respecting senior executive to seek help from a personal 'coach', who can provide a sympathetic 'listening ear', and help develop him or her to their full potential.

And, at the same time that the helping dimension of human communication, and possibly friendship itself, has become increasingly professionalised in the roles of counsellor, coach and therapist, the culture as a whole has become more psychologically oriented and suffused with the language of psychotherapy and heightened emotionality. The popular reaction to the death of Princess Diana was considered to be a watershed in the development of a greater emotional expressiveness within British public life. Since Gazza's famous tears in the world cup game against Germany in 1994, the coverage of sport has increasingly drawn attention to the intense feelings of players and spectators. There is a famous photograph of the footballer Stuart Pearce, which was used in a billboard advertising campaign, looking like a Francis Bacon painting after he redeemed an earlier miss in a crucial game by scoring an important goal in a penalty shoot out. Football coverage shows highlighted moments, extended through slow motion replay, of extreme emotion to the accompaniment of mood-enhancing music. Tennis players now, having won an important game, in their immediate post-match interview, are asked less about their technique and more about what they were feeling at a particular crucial point in the game.

In the leisure industry, holidays are now a further chance for self-improvement. This is most explicit in centres that market themselves as combining a holiday, often in the sun, with a personal development workshop. But the marketing of all kinds of holidays offers an experience, which is designed to appeal to and cultivate the desire for self-development of the participants.

In the business world, too, the hot topic a few years ago, riding on the backs of at least two decades of management self development texts, was 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman, 1996). Effective managers, it was claimed, were not necessarily those who were the smartest as measured in IQ points but those who were emotionally literate and sensitive to their own and others' feelings. Managers are exhorted to complete

questionnaires and undertake training programmes to develop their capacity to express their own feelings and empathise with others.

In literary and artistic worlds, the contemporary mode is confessional. Tracey Emin produces an embroidered tent with the names of all her past lovers on display called "Everyone I have ever slept with 1963-1995", and is short-listed for the Turner prize in 1999 by showing us her bed. Books about his childhood of appalling abuse by Dave Pelzer - considered by the literary reviews of the Sunday newspapers to be poorly written - leap into, and remain in, best-seller lists. Billy Connolly brings out a biography written by his wife detailing his traumatic childhood, that rocketed to the top of the best seller lists for non-fiction. The novelist Hanif Kureisha, speaking in an interview in the Independent Review on 19 July 2001, said:

"I figured out about the time that I was writing *Intimacy* that it wasn't irony that was the modern mode: it was confession. The exemplary paradigm for modern communication was somebody speaking at a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous."

Tim Adams, writing in the *Observer* on 11 November 2001, contrasts the socially engaging work of Trollope, Eliot and Hardy writing in 1875 to the dearth of social or political vision in nearly all recent British, though curiously not American, fiction. He says, about British literature as a whole: "The devolution of attention from public to private space has been the great shift of consciousness of the last century." The immediate focus of his article is on the current adaptation of Trollope's novel, 'The way we live now', to the television screen. Adams amusingly comments that the pervasive voice of contemporary English fiction should be summed up instead as "How I feel now". He concludes:

"The impetus in contemporary English fiction seems not political but solipsistic. The preferred form of our imaginative culture is the memoir, and we like our novels to appropriate that voice, to return us to our childhood. It is a version of the same self-absorbed rhetoric that fills our television screens: rooms full of disconnected people sharing secrets of their damaged selves. It is, no doubt, something to do with the way we live now."

The therapeutic and the personal confession, thus, no longer exists within the private domain of the analyst's couch or priest's confessional box but has, as Lasch and others have indicated, migrated into everyday life, appearing on daytime television and the ever-increasing varieties of the latest television format, reality TV.

In a British culture, especially, genuinely suffering the ill effects of centuries of stiff upper-lipped emotional suppression, this widespread emphasis on self-development and greater emotional expressiveness appears liberating and unequivocally a good thing. Yet, as a brief glance at any serious thinking in philosophy, economics, sociology or psychology will indicate, notions of 'self' and 'development' are not so apparently straightforward. Who exactly is this self that is being developed? And what does development imply? Both the concept of 'self' and 'development' contain a host of taken for granted assumptions which usually remain hidden and accepted and masquerade as 'common sense' or the way things just simply are. In the rest of this chapter, I want to first, briefly, critically examine ideas of 'development', and then go on to explore, in much greater depth, ideas about the 'self'. I aim, overall, to show that there is a dominant way of thinking about the self which shapes the way identity is constructed and experienced and privileges certain aspects of experience over others.

Section 2. Development

*"Life without Limits: Clarify what you want, Redefine your Dreams,
Become the Person you want to be"*

Book Title by Lucinda Bassett 2001

I will take 'personal development' to be synonymous with 'personal growth'. It seems to be self-evident that personal growth and development are to be valued. In the field of management development, opportunities for development are prized and are often a sign that the recipient is being 'fast-tracked' and groomed for higher positions.

Yet, in other disciplines such as business and economics, notions of growth and development are being seriously questioned (Schumacher, 1975; Henderson, 1978, 1995; Ekins 1986; Sachs 1995), and re-framed (Hawken, Lovins & Lovins, 1999). Wolfgang Sachs (1995) opens the introduction to a collection of articles critically examining development with the words: "The last forty years can be called the age of development. This epoch is coming to an end. The time is ripe to write its obituary" (p. 1).

Although economic growth is at the heart of most orthodox economic thinking and believed to be the engine of the global economy, this model of ever-increasing growth is now being challenged, especially from within the environmental movement. Beginning with the Club of Rome report on the 'Limits of Growth' (Meadows et al, 1972), and continuing through to the many contemporary voices raised in opposition to globalisation, there is a heightened awareness that resources are not infinite, that the planet, in Herman Daley's words (1989) has a 'limited carrying capacity'. Moreover, critical analyses of globalisation (Korten, 1995, 2000; Henderson, 1999; Klein, 2000) point out that the ideas and practices of economic development embodied in organisations like the World Trade Organisation are not politically neutral. Models of growth and free trade favour some interests, particularly those of large multi-national companies, whilst claiming to be in the interests of all.

Other writers (Hillman, 1995; Bleakley, 2000) critique growth and development from a different but related perspective by arguing that humanistic models of personal growth and development form a psychological ideology that is well-suited to the ever-expanding growth models of economic capitalism. Bleakley, suggests that:

"Personal growth is paradoxically aligned with capitalist economics, in which 'experience' is transparently 'owned' and 'expressed' rather than interrogated as a construct of humanistic psychology and its technology of counselling." (p. 14).

Strongly influenced by Foucault's (1981, 1987, 1988) work on 'self-surveillance' and 'technologies' of the self, Bleakley is urging his readers to take a critically reflective perspective on how the underpinning assumptions of humanistic psychology create a discourse which shapes and defines human subjectivity in a particular way. With the result that much-beloved concepts such as authenticity, empowerment, and self-actualisation, which are meant to encourage greater individual freedom, become, instead, part of a system of self-subjugation and an ideology that neatly dovetails with capitalist free-market economics.

James Hillman, in his book 'Kinds of Power' (1995), also critiques naive notions of growth, which see growth as basically about getting bigger and better. He argues that these simplistic ideas of growth and development "teach psychological capitalism: how inferiorities are overcome and impairments integrated into an ever-growing ego that is getting it all together. Developed personalities can do what ever they want. They take charge of their fates." (p. 47).

In this passage, Hillman is making an important link between a mode of psychological thinking which stresses that people can be whoever they want to be, which, to my mind, reaches its apotheosis in some forms of neuro-linguistic programming, and a highly individualistic, rather macho, self-determining, grabbing the world by the 'scruff of the neck' view of human agency. This view of human agency is still a very active force in shaping managerial culture – witness the many stories of the self-made man, of the executive who single-handedly turned the organisation around – and which furthermore serves to justify the huge salaries and bonuses of senior managerial talent. In illustration of this, Cystal's study in 1991, wittily titled 'In Search of Excess', showed that the average American CEO earned more than 160 times the average American worker, compared with a differential of 20 times in Japan, a more collectively oriented society.

Alongside the usual optimistic, positive notions of growth which imply increase, evolution, progress, integration, temporal succession in stages, and self-generation, Hillman wants to add the darker, shadow aspects of growth – deepening, intensification, shedding, repetition and emptying. He does not want to lose or reject the idea of growth, which he thinks represents an important archetypal human desire. Rather, he wants to enrich and re-vision it by including those aspects which are often silenced and denied.

Having begun, now, to question notions of 'development', I want to move on to look at what kinds of ideas of the 'self' inform mainstream thinking and practice.

Section 3. Outline of Argument

"The test of a first rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind and still retain the ability to function."

F.Scott Fitzgerald

The overall thesis I want to advance and elaborate in the remainder of this chapter is how conventional ideas of the 'self' which form part of the dominant mainstream intellectual, social and cultural discourses serve both to construct our sense of, and shape our experience of, our-selves. My argument, in summary, will be that the dominant underlying frame of reference and way of thinking about the self suggests that

the self is separate, singular, primarily cognitive, and concrete. These views of the self pervade our everyday discourses. They become what Berger and Luckman (1966) call 'plausibility structures', that is part of a natural, common-sensical, taken-for-granted reality. In so doing, they camouflage and strip away the inherently aesthetic, social and political processes of self-creation. In contrast to this dominant view of the self, there also exist ideas of the self, both contemporary and historical, which emphasise the relational, pluralistic, embodied and fictional nature of the self.

The term discourse here arises from the work of Foucault (1980), and is defined by Burr (1995) as "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way produce a particular version of events." Foucault's work shows how societal discourses define what forms of knowledge are held to be true and valid at any time. Those people who control discourse thereby control knowledge. At the same time the dominant knowledge determines who is able to take up positions of power. In his analysis, power and knowledge are intertwined.

I want to go on to outline and contrast a number of opposing ideas that can be used to understand the nature of the self. These oppositions are; separate vs relational; singular vs plural; cognitive vs embodied; and concrete vs fictional. My argument will be that habitual and, what could be called 'normal' ideas of the self, favour and privilege the first element in each of these oppositions. In so doing, they constellate a particular view of the self. Such a view of the self is not neutral but serves the dominant social and cultural ideology, and is a key part of what Gramsci (1971) calls cultural hegemony. This is not therefore just a matter of academic hair-splitting and competing theoretical ideas. Ideas of something as dear and close to people as their self are very powerful in shaping the way that we come to organise our experience and construct the worlds we live in. As we construct our worlds, so we construct our selves. Similarly as we construct our selves, so we construct our worlds. In constructing a self through the way we come to think of ourselves, through the ideas, constructs, images, and metaphors we use, and the way this all fits into an overall discourse, certain aspects of experience are emphasised and others left inarticulate and difficult to voice.

A few words here, too, are useful about how to think about the kinds of binary oppositions that I want to explore. In traditional Aristotelian logic, which has become the main logical form in Western thought, it is necessary for contradictions to be eliminated. It is logically impossible for the self to be both one thing and its opposite, both separate and relational, for example. Yet it is precisely this deeply paradoxical,

logically contradictory nature of the self that I wish to advance. I want to suggest that understanding the nature of the self requires an understanding and acceptance of paradox - not just one central paradox, but a multitude of paradoxes. By using propositional logic to get rid of paradox, or to collapse paradox into one side of the polarity, theories of the self are limited to a way of thinking which tends to be overly linear, one-sided and unable to appreciate, comprehend and account for the full complexity and mystery of the self.

In the field of organisational theory, some authors (Stacey, Griffin and Shaw, 2000; McKenzie, 1996) have embraced paradox in their thinking and writing about organisations. They point to recent well-established and highly reputed thinking in the 'new' sciences of complexity. This shows that many different kinds of physical, natural and social phenomena, from chemical reactions to stock markets, do not just exist in logically exclusive opposing states - neither just ordered nor disordered, stable or unstable. They also have the capability to exist in a condition in which they are both at the same time. This condition, according to Waldrop's book 'Complexity' (1992), about the different people working in the emerging new sciences generically described as complexity, was given the evocative name 'edge of chaos' by Chris Langton, a computer scientist who had invented the computer game of Artificial Life. The 'edge of chaos' condition is contrasted with the two other possible states in which living systems can exist – stability, in which a system repeats itself over and over again, and disintegration in which the system falls apart. In fact, complexity theorists argue, it is precisely this paradoxical capability to be both structured and unstructured, to contain opposites, to live at the 'edge of chaos', that give living systems their capacity to learn and change.

I will return to the idea of paradox as helping to define the nature of the self at the end of this chapter, (in section 8), having explored each of four significant oppositions - separate vs. relational, singular vs. plural, cognitive vs. embodied, concrete vs. fictional. For now, I will turn to the first of the oppositions I want to explore – separate vs. relational.

Section 4. Separate vs. Relational

It seems to be self-evident that we exist as separate beings, possessing an internal world, which can be clearly differentiated and set apart from the external world. I feel myself to be distinct and apart from the world and others who I meet. It is also typically assumed in western popular culture that this sense of having a separate interior self is a natural

given, part of the human condition, true across all cultures and across time. In addition, this sense of separateness is highly valued and positively connoted, particularly for men. People are admired for being independent, for being their own person, for not being readily or easily influenced by others.

Yet as some cultural critics have pointed out, this emphasis on a separate, independent, individual self is historically a relatively recent phenomenon. Jonathon Dollimore (2001), following Jacob Burckhardt (1990), locates the birth of a distinctive view of the individual in the Renaissance. Dollimore is not claiming that, historically, individuals did not exist before the Renaissance, but he understands the emergence of the Renaissance individual as an intensification of certain qualities. These qualities are; the quest for knowledge, the quest for power, a heightened sense of individuality, and a heightened sense of self, which is, furthermore, experienced as problematic.

These qualities find a prototypical, masterly artistic expression in the complex and enigmatic figure of Shakespeare's (1988) Hamlet. Hamlet, through his acute and often agonising self-consciousness, embodies a distinctively modern consciousness. He says;

"What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason!
How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how
express and admirable! In action how like an angel!
In apprehension how like a god!"

Furthermore, in Hamlet, Shakespeare provides the maxim for the entire quest of twentieth century humanistic psychology when he uses Polonius' parting advice to his son, Laertes, to say; "Above all else, to thine own self be true."

Others (Gergen, 1999; Lyons 1978) see the Enlightenment rather than the Renaissance as the primary source of contemporary beliefs about the self.

Within the enlightenment tradition, Tarnas (1991) and Zohar (1990) have indicated the crucial and especially influential role of Descartes in elaborating the philosophical grounds for the modern view of the self. Descartes, heavily effected by the sceptical crisis in French philosophy of his time, wanted to establish an indisputable foundation for knowledge. He wanted to create a complete science of nature based on certainty and to develop a method, which would guarantee scientific knowledge founded, like mathematics, on self-evident first principles. Descartes thought that, although

everything could be systematically doubted, what clearly was not in doubt was the doubting subject itself. Cogito ergo sum.

As Tarnas says:

"Here, then, was the prototypical declaration of the modern self. Established as a fully separate, self-defining entity, for whom its own rational self-awareness was absolutely primary – doubting everything except itself, seeing itself in opposition not only to traditional authorities but to the world, as subject against object, as a thinking, observing, measuring manipulating being, fully distinct from an objective God and an external nature." (p. 280).

There is an interesting irony expounded by Sheldrake (1988) at the root of Descartes' formulation of his philosophy. For his view of a new science did not arise out of the systematic, analytical, deductive method he proposed as the 'foundations of a marvellous science' but came to him at the age of twenty three in an extraordinary concentrated intuitive vision. This was confirmed the following night by a remarkable dream in which the 'Angel of Truth' appeared to him and revealed that mathematics was the sole key needed to unlock the secrets of nature.

Zohar (1990) shares Tarnas' (1991) view of the important role of Descartes in shaping the modern sense of the self and also, like Tarnas, points to the equally significant influence of Newton in shaping a world-view, which stresses the fundamental separateness of the self. She says that:

"Cartesian isolation was further underpinned by Newton's physics, where the concept of matter as consisting of so many separate and indivisible balls complemented Descartes' separate and indivisible minds." (p. 111).

Capra too in his book "The Turning Point" (1982) argues for the critical role of Newton in setting out the grounds for the worldview which has dominated the last three hundred years. He says, of the synthesising power of Newton's thought:

"Before Newton there had been two opposing trends in seventeenth century science; the empirical, inductive method represented by Bacon and the rational, deductive method represented by Descartes. Newton, in his Principia, introduced the proper mixture of both methods, emphasising that neither experiments without systematic interpretation nor deduction from first principles will lead to a reliable theory." (p. 50).

Zohar goes on to show how this Cartesian-Newtonian tradition exerts a strong influence throughout western thought not just in scientific thinking and methodology but also throughout subsequent philosophy. She sees a direct philosophical lineage from this tradition to the twentieth century existentialist masterpieces of Heidegger's (1962) 'Being and Time' and Sartre's (1956) 'Being and Nothingness'.

In Sartre's work, especially, and most starkly illustrated in his novel 'Nausea' (1938), we encounter the ultimate isolation and alienation of the individual self. This then receives further artistic refinement and expression in the work of Samuel Beckett who explores with sparse precision the despair, absurdity and futility of such a self. As Tarnas (1991), says concluding his overview of the development of the western worldview; "In the four centuries of modern man's existence, Bacon and Descartes had become Kafka and Beckett."

Amidst this isolation and separateness, the modern existential hero is born. This is the person who, alone and adrift on a sea of meaninglessness, has the rugged courage to face this without illusion and craft his or her own meaning and values onto an alien impenetrable world. Such thinking is popularised in popular culture through images of the lone outsider in films – now, in America at least, no longer just alone on his horse, but, as Putnam's studies (2000) indicated, 'bowling alone' too. Clint Eastwood rides into town, loyal to nothing and nobody, apart from his own finely-honed and deeply felt sense of justice. The result is usually devastation.

Female writers (Gilligan, 1982; Marshall, 1984, 1995; Tannen, 1990) have pointed out the gendered nature of these conceptions of the self, indicating how they stress what have been traditional masculine characteristics of heroic assertion and steely independence in contrast to more female qualities of receptiveness and connection. Scheman (1983) takes this further by pointing out the origins of gendered concepts of the self as both overall philosophy and individual identity in childrearing:

"The view of a separate, autonomous, sharply differentiated self embodied in liberal political and economic ideology and in the individualist philosophies of mind can be seen as a defensive reification of the process of ego development in males raised by women in a patriarchal society."

In a similar vein, eco-feminists (Griffin, 1978; Merchant 1980; French, 1985; Shiva 1988; Spretnak, 1991) have pointed out the radically patriarchal nature of the fundamental

assumptions underpinning the Newtonian-Cartesian worldview, what Jonathon Porritt (2000) calls the “dark roots of modern science” (p. 25). These writers all emphasise the links between patriarchal society and a scientific worldview that sees nature as, wild, uncontrollable, threatening and female which therefore, out of fear, needs to be controlled, and results in both the oppression of nature and of women.

The set of assumptions forming the Cartesian-Newtonian worldview then matures in the eighteenth century into a, by now triumphalist and ascendant science, dominated by what Willis Harman (1988) describes as “an ontological assumption of separateness”, the gulf between subject and object, between inner and outer, between the observer and the observed. Hobbes further articulates this view of the isolated individual competing for scarce resources, and this receives further elaboration in Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Zohar (1990) also outlines how the continuing influence of Newton and Descartes, and the modern scientific worldview catalysed by them, massively effect Freud’s work and, through him, the whole twentieth century history of psychology and psychotherapy. Freud’s primary model of the human being is that of the separate individual, governed by instinctual drives and desires. Clearly, Freud was influenced by nineteenth century science and many of the metaphors he uses to describe the human psyche, for example hydraulics, are borrowed from contemporary mechanistic scientific thinking of the time.

For Zohar, this means that “our present psychology of the person rests almost entirely on a model of the self as a thing which exists in isolation” (p. 138). This is further reinforced by the growth and impact of medical psychiatry as a scientific discipline, which emphasises the person as a separate physiological system, and reduces psychological issues to biochemical functioning.

This tradition of psychological thinking initiated by Freud reaches its zenith in the work of the psychoanalysts Klein, Fairburn and Guntrip who established the ‘object relations’ school as a distinctive psychoanalytic tradition. Under the influence of a scientific worldview, which stresses the separateness of the subject and the split between subject and object, key interpersonal relationships such as a baby’s relationship with its mother, become relationships conceived with external objects, which are then internalised.

Yet, as Stacey (2000) points out, alongside this dominant tradition in psychoanalysis, which focusses attention on the separate individual, co-exists a different, less

mainstream tradition, which emphasises a more relational-oriented psychology. This has as its basis a very different view of human beings. Rather than seeing individuals as distinct psychological entities, relationship psychology, as Stacey terms it, insists on a perspective, which sees individuals as constructed through the relationships they are part of. Within the psychoanalytic tradition, Stacey sees relationship psychology represented in three distinct areas; the intersubjectivity theory of Stolorow, Atwood and Brandschaft (1994) which does not see people as objects affecting one another but subjects interacting with one another; the detailed observational work on mother-baby interactions by the child developmental psychologist Stern (1985, 1995); and the group-analytic theory inaugurated by Foulkes (1948) and more radically developed in the work of Dalal (1998).

In the field of sociology, Stacey (2000, 2001) shows how the work of Mead (1934), Elias (1970, 1989) and Bahktin (1986) contribute to a perspective which does not, like most psychological theorising, as I have been arguing, give primacy to the individual. Nor does it, conversely, like other traditions in sociology, make social structure the determining force in shaping individual agency. Stacey is developing an argument in which he wants to no longer constitute the individual and the social/organisational as accounting for separate and different levels of phenomena. The individual is social through and through. The work of Mead (1934) shows that even when the self feels at its most private and interior, it is engaged in a silent conversation with itself, usually called thinking, which is socially rooted. In Mead's work, thinking and self-consciousness are only possible by the self being able to become an object to itself, that is to experience itself from the viewpoint of the other. Self and other are mutually created. Mind is not therefore a property of an individual but emerges in and through social relationships. In fact, mind is the very internalisation of those social relationships. Furthermore, in Stacey's view, the social has no separate, independent existence apart from its manifestation in individuals and their interrelationships. Stacey wants to shift his thinking away from the long running debate in sociology about whether individual human agency or social structure is primary. Even conceiving the argument in terms of primacy is to fall into a way of thinking that separates out the individual and the social into different levels.

Another related set of ideas in sociology and philosophy, which have profoundly challenged the idea of a separate self are social constructionism (Gergen, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1996, 1999; Harre, 1979, 1986; Shotter, 1993). This builds on the seminal work of Berger and Luckman (1966) in their exploration of how reality does not exist independently 'out there' but is socially constructed, maintained, and transformed. Social

constructionist thinking, too, draws particularly on the different ideas of language developed in the second half of the twentieth century, originating with Wittgenstein (1953) and also in French post-structural analyses of language as a system (Saussure, 1974; Derrida, 1978, 1981).

Theorists within this tradition point out that, particularly since Wittgenstein's later work (1953), in which he emphasised the role of language, not so much as a truthful mirror of life but as, in Gergen's (1999) phrase, 'the doing of life', it is no longer possible to retain a simplistic conception of language as having a one-to-one representational relationship with the world. This one-to-one relationship between language and the world, called a representational theory of language, with language conceived metaphorically as a mirror or picture, is at the centre of the Enlightenment's view of language. Such a view of language then leads to the further claim that what language is doing as a form of communication is accurately transferring knowledge and truth between people. John Locke (1835/1959) claimed that words are "signs of internal conceptions". They are "marks for the ideas within the individual's mind whereby they might be made known to others and the thoughts to man's mind might be conveyed from one to another." Gergen (1999) summarises Wittgenstein's (1953) work neatly with the view that that he replaces the underlying metaphor of language as a picture with the metaphor of language as a game. Words have no intrinsic meaning, but find their meaning in their specific use, in particular 'language games'.

The assumptions that what language is doing is simply describing and representing an already existing external world, and accurately conveying these descriptions to others, are shown, by these thinkers, to be highly problematic, and has major implications for the nature of, and grounds, for valid knowledge. Denzin (1997) calls this the 'crisis of representation' which he sees as one of three major crises facing the social sciences - the other two are the crises in legitimation and praxis. Gergen (1999) also sees developments in postmodern philosophy as occasioning a profound crisis in western enlightenment-based views of truth, objectivity, knowledge and morality as well as the self.

All this points to the generative role played by language and conversation in shaping not just social realities but also individual identities. Shotter (1989), shows how, in English, the use of the pronoun "I" encourages us to develop a sense of self bounded by our skin and located inside "as something unique and distinct from all else that there is". Using

the work of Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986, 1993) and Voloshinov (1976, 1986), Shotter is advocating what he terms a dialogical view of the self. He says (1999);

"Thus, adopting this dialogical or relational view of people's psychic life suggests that people's 'inner lives' are neither so private, nor so inner, nor so logical, orderly, or systematic as has been assumed. Instead our 'thinking' not only reflects essentially the same ethical, rhetorical, political, and poetic features as those exhibited in the dialogical transactions between people, out in the world (Billig, 1996), but it does not go on wholly inside us as individuals either."

Harre (1979) also argues that language shapes a particular view of identity and human agency through the domination in language of the logic of individuals making active choices in their environments. Radical deconstructionist analyses of language (Derrida 1981) emphasise the nature of the text as a whole in the construction of meaning and subvert the idea of the intentional subjectivity of the author of a text as the source of a text's meaning. Again this is another strand of thinking that is undermining the notion of a separate autonomous rational subject standing apart, in this case from language. In the famous words of Derrida (1981);

"There is nothing outside of text."

So, rather than the starting point of thinking being the separate individual, as Descartes conceived, social constructionists insist on relationship as primary. It is only in relationship that meaning, thought and identity are created. Campbell (2000) has pointed out that in this emphasis on relationship, social constructionism is very similar to the body of thought that has come to be described as systems thinking. Systems thinking shares with social constructionism the key shift in focus from separate autonomous parts to relationships, processes, wholeness and interconnection (Capra, 1982, 1996).

Perhaps the arena in which systems thinking has been most fully elaborated in a form of practice for working with people is the field of family therapy. Here systemic ideas are used to work with the way a whole system, a family, functions to shape the reality for its members and define certain behaviours of individuals in the family as problematic which therefore require help. This contrasts to other interventions, which would focus solely on the individual who is the holder of the problem. In fact, an important spur to the development of a more systemic view of family relationships was provided by the realisation that, when social workers, child psychologists, and psychiatrists tried to

separately treat one member of a system whose behaviour had been defined either by the family or an external agency as a problem, that person's behaviour often became more dysfunctional. The treatment needed to be of the system of relationships whose functioning as a total system was creating difficulties for one or more of its members.

It is, though, not even necessary to develop a sophisticated relational theory of the self, as Stacey (2000, 2001) does, or to master the intricacies of critical poststructural textual analysis, or to subscribe to a systemic view of family life, to render problematic the common-sense, folk-psychology notion of a separate self. Indeed, most child psychologists think that the establishment of a distinct sense of self is not a preordained given but a key developmental milestone fraught with potential difficulties. Initially, a new-born baby is in symbiotic union with its mother. It does not have a separate sense of identity apart from its mother. Many mothers, too, do not experience themselves as entirely separate from the baby but as part of a wider mother-infant dyad. Over time, with an appropriate nurturing environment or 'good enough' parenting in Winnicott's (1971) terms, the child learns to differentiate itself from its environment and achieve a separate sense of identity. This process is not one with a guaranteed successful outcome, however, and the developing child can experience and sustain many threats and wounds to its identity on the way. There is evidence (Mackewn, 1997), for example, that an increasing number of people seeking counselling and psychotherapy can be described as having a 'fragile self-process' and/or would meet the diagnostic criteria for disorders of the self such as borderline personality disorder or narcissistic personality disorder.

Babies do not, therefore, arrive in the world with a pre-formed sense of self. Neither are they the complete tabula rasa primed for social conditioning that unreconstructed behaviourists think. They may have genetic, biological and personality dispositions and preferences, which will, as Stern's (1985, 1995) experimental infant observation work demonstrates, actively organise their interaction with others, rather than simply passively responding to, and being shaped by, their caregivers

This all points to the significance of boundaries in defining what is self and what is other. It also points to the fluid, permeable nature of this boundary, rather than the notion of a boundary as a sharp dividing line – more like the boundary of a cell-membrane or coastline than the rigidity of a metal container. In moments of intimacy with others, or deep connection with the natural world, or in states of altered consciousness, or

mystical experience, these boundaries can more or less radically dissolve giving a different and often expanded sense of self to our normal day to day identities.

The boundary between self and other is not therefore a pre-existing given but is built, maintained, sustained and altered in and through interaction with others. It is profoundly shaped by the wider cultural context it is part of. As Trompenaars and Hampden Turner (1998, 2000) and Hofstede (1984) show in their work on cultural differences, different cultures construct identity and draw lines around the definition of self and other in very different ways.

The idea of an ever-changing, more or less permeable boundary, between self and other finds expression in Gestalt psychology in Fritz Perls' (1976) concept of the 'contact boundary'. In their book on the life and work of Fritz Perls, Clarkson and Mackewn (1993) say, (their emphasis); " The contact boundary contains and separates the person from his environment *while at the same time* being his point of contact with the environment" (p. 56). In this concept of the 'contact boundary', as Clarkson and Mackewn expound it, we find the paradox which is at the core of this whole section; that is, the boundary functions both to give a sense of separate identity, and simultaneously is the focus of relationship with the external world. This is echoed in Bakhtin's comment (1984); "A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary: looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another."

The same theme of a self-constituted boundary is found, too, in a very different field, in Maturana and Varela's (1980) idea of 'autopoiesis', a Greek term which means self-making. From their work (1980) with the simplest autopoietic system, a living cell, they suggest that a defining characteristic of all living systems is their network-based organisation in which each part of the network participates in the production and/or transformation of the other parts. And a significant part of any system thus created is its boundary, which defines the system as a distinct whole. "In a living system", Maturana and Varela (1980) claim, "the product of its operation is its own organisation" (P. 82).

From this and their work on processes of cognition, they are proposing a radically different way of thinking about the organism and its relation to the environment. Instead of the traditional Darwinian view which stresses the adaptation of organisms to their environment, which presupposes separate organisms existing apart from their environment, they suggest that as well as being effected or perturbed by their

environment, organisms simultaneously make themselves and create their environment. In so doing, to use their poetic turn of phrase (1987), they 'bring forth a world'.

This rethinking in biology of the relation between an organism and its environment, which parallels the traditions in psychology I have been setting out above that are trying to rethink the relationship between self and other, receives further theoretical exposition in Lovelock's (1979, 1991) Gaia hypothesis. In this intriguing and bold hypothesis, Lovelock puts forward the idea of the earth and its atmosphere as a complex self-regulating living system in which life and the conditions for the existence of life co-create one another. In the words of Lynn Margulis (1989), Lovelock's long term collaborator;

"When scientists tell us that life adapts to an essentially passive environment of chemistry, physics, and rocks, they perpetuate a severely distorted view. Life actually makes and forms and changes the environment to which it adapts. Then that 'environment' feeds back on the life that is changing and acting and growing in it. There are constant cyclic interactions."

In their conception of Gaia, therefore, Lovelock and Margulis, like others in this section, are challenging the way an organism and its relationship with its external environment have, from Descartes onwards, come to be defined. Instead of seeing the organism as distinctively separate from its environment, they draw attention instead to the relationship between organism and environment which mutually and simultaneously forms both of them.

James Hillman's words, from his foreword to 'Ecopsychology' (ed. Roszak, Gomes & Kanner, 1995), pointedly entitled 'A psyche the size of the earth', provide an acute summary and re-statement of the argument I have been elaborating;

"There is only one core issue for psychology. Where is the "me"? Where does the "me" begin? Where does the "other" begin?" (p. xvii)

Hillman goes on to eloquently state and further extend the position I have been articulating so far.

"For most of its history, psychology took for granted an intentional subject: the biographical "me" that was the agent and the sufferer of all "doings". For most of its history, psychology located this "me" within human persons defined by their

physical skin and their immediate behaviour. The subject was simply me-in-my body-and-in-my-relations with other subjects. The familiar term that covered this entire philosophical system was “ego” and what the ego registered were called “experiences”. (p. xvii)

Like others who want to challenge the way psychology has traditionally conceived of the self, Hillman stresses how such a definition of self narrows and restricts thought and experience. It also, following on from Descartes’ original and highly influential postulation of soul not existing in nature and being only present in human beings, leads to disconnection and alienation from nature and the external world. The material world is stripped of soul and becomes, in the words Whitehead (1925) used to describe the mechanistic philosophy that ensues from this worldview, “a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless: merely the hurrying of material endlessly, meaninglessly”.

For Hillman, if we can no longer locate soul in nature, no longer experience the anima mundi, it becomes possible to perpetrate and legitimise environmental damage to nature, and, in doing this, simultaneously our own lives become more soulless. In the words of the Leonard Cohen (1968) song, on a related idea; “We forget to pray for the angels and the angels forget to pray for us.”

Hillman extends the argument about the boundaries and separate boundedness of the individual self by not just including and rethinking the inter-subjective domain as the inextricable intertwining of the social and the individual, as Stacey does, but also by taking the further audacious step of including the self within the natural and non-natural external world. Not only is he challenging the well-worn dualism of self and other, but also questioning the related dualism of inner and outer.

Hillman’s project is to re-vision psychology and move it out of the consulting room and into the world. Psychology is also ecology. He is concerned with the excessive preoccupation of psychology with the individual self and its experiences that can lead to the domination of psychology by, and its restriction to, the theories and practices of the ego. Hillman, though, does not just have an overly narrow, cognitive, experimental, quantitative, quasi-scientific, positivistic psychology in his sights. He mounts a determined assault on the whole edifice of humanistic psychology, with its emphasis following Maslow (1962), of authenticity, self-actualisation, and the solely inner journey of personal discovery of an essential or ‘true’ self.

In his desire to bring psychology and the self out of its internal preoccupations, away from its attempt to excavate, as in an archaeological dig, a person's deep self. Hillman says, in the same preface;

"Moreover, an individual's harmony with his or her "own deep self" requires not merely a journey to the interior but a harmonising with the environmental world. The deepest self cannot be confined to 'in here' because we can't be sure it is not also or even entirely 'out there'! If we listen to Roszak., and to Freud and Jung, the most profoundly collective and unconscious self is the natural material world."

In this section I have brought together and outlined the work of a number of writers from different disciplines, all of whom are grappling with the legacy of the Cartesian worldview, and trying to find other ways of thinking about the self which emphasises its relational rather than separate character. These theorists are not denying that the self exists apart from and independently of others; what they are trying to show, however, is the paradox of how this very separateness and distinctiveness can only be constituted through relationship with others.

In the next section I want to focus on the second opposition outlined at the beginning of this chapter: that of singular vs. plural.

Section 5. Singular vs. plural

*"I cannot understand the mystery but
I am always conscious of myself as two.
Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
I am large, I contain multitudes."*

Walt Whitman (1992)

Alongside the commonly accepted, linguistically shaped view of a distinct, separate self, as discussed in the previous section, goes the closely linked notion of a singular, coherent, centred self. We think of ourselves as one continuous person, not many disparate people. As with the idea of a separate self, though, recent thinking in many disciplines is challenging the idea of a single, unified self and emphasising instead the

multiple, decentered nature of the self. Even if we accept that it is self-evident that we experience ourselves in a unitary manner, there is still the question, that has intrigued hard-headed neuroscientists as well as speculative philosophers, as to how this unity arises from the diversity of our sense making modalities.

Within both science and psychology many theories of the brain and personality see the operation of the whole in terms of the parts they are composed of.

In neuroscience, influential models of brain functioning have suggested major subdivisions of brain functioning. Levy-Agresti and Sperry (1968) formulated the, by now well known, thesis of horizontal divisions of right and left brain-hemispheres, which each show distinct and different cognitive abilities and overall processing styles. Divisions can also be organised on a vertical axis. MacLean (1990) put forward a model of the triune or three-fold brain, conceived in evolutionary terms as the successive layers of reptilian, mammalian and neo-mammalian brain. In addition to these two forms of spatial division within the brain, there is significant evidence for different temporal forms of organisation. It is now thought that these temporal forms of organisation based on oscillatory patterns of neurone activity are the key to how the brain integrates its different modalities Lancaster, in an article on how unity of experience arises from the 'multiple brain' (1999), says;

"As suggested already, the contemporary emphasis on dynamic binding in temporal terms adds an additional dimension of multiplicity to the spatial one inherent in these models. Systems integrated within an oscillatory coherent pattern in one moment may be divergent in the next, and such systems may include neurones both within and across the hemispheric and time boundaries." (p. 137)

These broad spatial and temporal divisions, and also evidence from brain damage in which very specific brain functions can be lost, point to the brain and central nervous system being a modular system with a high degree of local autonomy. The central unsolved problem then still remains in the field of neuroscience as how to account for the felt unity of experience in the world that co-exists with the experimental evidence for the multiplicity of the modular brain.

In the field of psychology, many theories of personality are theories of the self or personality rather than theories of selves or multiple personalities. Yet, within many influential theories of personality, an overall unity is conceived as forming different parts.

In Freud's theory of psychic structure, the major sub-divisions are id, ego and superego. Berne (1961), in his attempt to make ideas from psychoanalysis more accessible in the form of his theory transactional analysis, writes about the three major ego-states of adult, parent and child, which differ in verbal language, attitude, non-verbal behaviour and emotional states. Other writers refer to sub-personalities (Assaglioli, 1965; Rowan, 1990) and sub-selves (Martindale, 1980; Shapiro, 1976). All these theories, though, tend to combine the different parts and integrate them into one single coherent self, with the ego or its equivalent at its center. In the famous phrase of Freud, summarising the purpose of psychoanalysis, "where id was, there shall ego be".

So although many authors recognise multiplicity of parts, there is still a predominating influence in their theories in these parts being integrated into a coherent whole under the rule of the rational ego. Moreover, such integration under the ego's dominion, what Freud and others call 'reality testing', is generally assumed to be an indication of healthy psychological functioning.

In their article (1999) on 'Postmodern culture and the plural self', Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone, explicitly connect this form of psychological theorising to the underlying assumptions of modernity, which as I have argued earlier in this chapter, bear the continual hallmarks of Cartesian thinking. They say;

"It is no mere coincidence, moreover, that virtually all modern systems, whether social, economic or psychological, have been characterised by the value placed upon vertical, hierarchical, integration. This is one of the features of modernity that distinguishes it from the postmodern emphasis on diversity." (p.96)

In contrast to the unifying, vertical, hierarchical integration we have become familiar with in both our organisational forms and our theories of organisation, it is possible, as Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone suggest, to think about the organisation of the self in terms of horizontal and decentralised processes. This is, interestingly, similar to the different ideas of organisation arising from the complexity sciences, in which, as Capra (1996) says, the basic metaphor for the organisation of living systems is the self-organising network. I will return to the parallel between complex systems and postmodern thought later in this section.

Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone further argue that in its critique of foundationalism and deconstruction of all meta-narratives, postmodernism paves the way for an

epistemological pluralism characterised by a profusion and proliferation of many narratives, that cannot all be linked together under the umbrella of one overarching theory. Indeed, Lyotard (1984) defines the postmodern stance as this 'incredulity towards all meta-narratives'. Likewise, on a psychological as well as an epistemological level, ideas of a core or singular self as the foundation for existence are replaced with multiplicity, diversity, flux and transformation. Postmodernism as a set of theoretical ideas is complemented by shifts in contemporary society, as exemplified by figures like Madonna and Bill Clinton, which encourage an ongoing shifting of, and experimentation, with identities, although I don't think Osama Bin Laden would align with this trend.

Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone use Gergen's (1991) thesis of 'the saturated self', to argue that, with the proliferation of technologies of communication in the twentieth century, people are exposed to a myriad of diverse influences which can potentially effect their identity. This leads to what they call simultaneous as well as serial pluralism. By this, they mean that we can be different people not only in the different sequential stages of our lives as developmental psychologists notably Erikson (1950), and their popularisers like Sheehy (1984), have shown, but also engage in a range of different identities at any one moment. Others in a similar optimistic vein, such as the postmodern feminist, Donna Haraway (1991), have indicated the emancipatory potential of electronic technology and the realm of cyberspace for the development of alternative non-sexist identities.

Rather than see the plurality of selves constituted in post modernity as problematic and a possible pathological indication of schizoid fragmentation, Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone prefer to view this multiplicity as adaptive, necessary in a rapidly changing society. In a rather chilling phrase reminiscent of the calculations of investment bankers, they refer to the benefits of "a dynamic portfolio of alternative self-concepts". As an example of such benefits, they cite the empirically based work of Linville (1987) as evidence that people with multiple and more complex self-concepts are better able to deal with stress.

Having indicated how the overall thrust of postmodern thinking supports the idea of a plural self, I now want to connect this movement in philosophy with the emergence in science of the study of complexity. This emerging field and its inter-related disciplines have been described by George Cowan, the founder of the Santa Fe Institute, the most significant inter-disciplinary centre for the development of complexity, as 'the sciences of the twenty-first century, ' (Waldrop, 1992).

In his book 'Complexity and Postmodernism' (1998), Cilliers explicitly links key ideas from postmodern thinking with the new sciences of complexity, particularly the connectionist approach to cognition. Some of these postmodern ideas, particularly Gergen and Denzin's identification of the 'crisis of representation' occasioned by the critique of language have already been outlined in this chapter. Cilliers makes extensive reference to Saussure's (1974) and Derrida's (1976) work on the nature of language.

Cilliers is keen to rescue postmodern thinkers, notably Derrida and Lyotard, whose work (1984) 'The Postmodern Condition' he considers as one of the 'classic texts' in defining postmodernism, from the charges levelled against them that their theories lead to nihilism and encourage a relativistic 'anything goes' attitude. By contrast, he says:

"My argument is that post-structuralism is not merely a subversive form of discourse analysis, but a style of thinking that is sensitive to the complexity of the phenomena under consideration" (p. 22).

He believes that there are significant affinities between the post-structural analysis of language, especially the work of Derrida (1978, 1981), and the way connectionist approaches in cognitive science (Rumelhart and McClelland, 1986) adopt a distributed approach to the modelling of brain functioning through neural network simulations. His overall argument is that the dynamics which generate meaning in language that are based on a system of relationships and their differences, as outlined by Saussure (1974), then critiqued and further developed by Derrida (1976), can also be used to describe the non-linear dynamics of complex systems in general.

Cillier wants to show that Saussure's notion of a sign as the basic unit in language and the idea of a node in a network are functionally equivalent. Meaning, deriving from language, can only be understood as a property of the relations between signs and not as an intrinsic property of the sign itself. Derrida argues against a one-to-one correspondence between a word and its meaning, what he calls a 'metaphysics of presence'. Summarising this view, Cilliers says:

"Meaning is the result of an interplay between all the words (or, rather, all the signs) in the system. It is an effect of the dynamics within the system, not of direct relationships between components of the system and objects in the world. This does not deny all relationships between the world and the system. To the contrary, the success of the system depends largely on the effectiveness of the interaction between the system and its environment" (p. 80).

Cilliers points to the capacity of models of neural networks to embody distributed representation. This is related to holographic ideas of brain functioning. Certain functions, for example memory, are not located in one part of the brain but are distributed across the system as a whole. In the notion of distributed representation, Cilliers finds an important shift away from the conventional representational model of the world that has dominated cognitive psychology. This is parallel to the shift away from the assumed representational nature of language to the different view of the meaning of language developed by the postmodern critique.

Cilliers takes the radical view that the idea of distributed representation undermines the very notion of representation itself. In models of neural networks, distributed representation removes the need for a central processor or co-ordinating agency. This could be located either from inside the system, what the philosopher Daniel Dennett (1991) has aptly called a 'Cartesian Theatre' or Arthur Koestler (1976) termed 'the ghost in the machine', or from an external designer position outside the system. Studies of complex adaptive systems show that the system itself has a distributed self-organising capacity. There is no need to posit a central function that carries out this role independent of the other parts of the network.

I am exploring Cilliers arguments here because I think they make fruitful linkages between two very influential contemporary areas of thought and further connect with the theme of this section and the chapter as a whole. We have become very familiar with thinking of the self as having its separate centre, a unified command structure, which processes and sifts through thoughts, ideas, feelings, bodily sensations, memories, fantasies and then makes executive decisions. Not only is this the dominant model we have of our selves but it is institutionally embodied as the main model of organisation and decision-making in most western social organisational structures. This is illustrated by Stacey's work (2000), in which he critiques and shows how the main frame of reference for strategic thinking and strategy formation is based on a view of autonomous, individual senior executives making rationally-based strategic choices to

create long-term strategic plans. These plans are conceived of separately from their implementation, and then require implementation as a further stage.

What happens if we drop this idea of a centralised decision making ego, as individuals and within organisations? If we give up the controlling fantasies such a conception assumes? If we no longer need the illusions of security and certainty such a self-concept offers? If we accept that the voice of the ego is not a grand unifying 'meta-narrative' but only one of many narratives we could use to speak about ourselves?

To summarise and connect the argument of this section with the previous section. In the words of Derrida (1983);

"The modern dominance of the principle of reason had to go hand in hand with the interpretation of the essence of beings as objects, an object present as representation (*Vorstellung*), an object placed and positioned before a subject. The latter, a man who says 'I', an ego certain of itself, thus ensures his own technical mastery over the totality of what is."

Having, so far in this section, explored concepts from postmodern thinking and complexity to illustrate ideas that challenge the conceptualisation of the self in unitary, singular terms, I now want to turn to a different tradition, which also emphasises the multiple nature of the self.

I have already mentioned the work of James Hillman at the end of the previous section in connection with his attempt to revision psychology to encompass ecology by relocating the boundaries of the separate self. Closely linked to this project is another of the themes in his writing which is an insistence on honouring the full multiplicity of the psyche. As Thomas Moore (1989) points out, Hillman chooses to use the more provocative word polytheistic, rather than a milder word like polycentric or multifaceted, for this multiplicity. This is a deliberate choice to contrast with forms of monotheism and monotheistic thinking which Hillman, like Jung, sees dominating psychology. Hillman (1975a) quotes the words of Jung (1970 Vol.13) in support of his position;

“We lack all knowledge of the unconscious psyche and pursue the cult of consciousness to the exclusion of all else. Our true religion is a monotheism of consciousness, a possession by it, coupled with a fanatical denial of the existence of fragmentary autonomous systems “

Hillman wishes to extend Jung's imaginative division of psychic life into the realms of animus and anima figures to include the full range of figures present in Greek mythology. Hillman (1975a), like other thinkers and artists, including Freud, Picasso, Heidegger, Joyce and Stravinsky is advocating a psychological “return to Greece”, as he believes happened in defining cultural moments, including the flowering of the Italian Renaissance, the Romantic revolt against the restrictions and excesses of rationalism, and in the culture of ancient Rome. He is arguing for a polytheistic archetypal psychology in which each of these Greek mythological figures is allowed psychic autonomy to represent and express the many, varied aspects of the psyche. As Moore (1989) says in his introduction to a selection of passages from Hillman's work entitled ‘Many Gods, Many Persons ;

“The psyche is not only multiple: it is a communion of many persons, each with specific needs, fears, longings, styles, and language. The many persons echo the many gods who define the worlds that underlie what appears to be a unified human being.” (p. 37).

And, like others in this chapter, but from a different standpoint, Hillman is adamant that these figures populating the psyche are not to be put under the single-minded rule of the heroic ego. This opposition to the potentially inflated dominion of the ego is pertinent to both theory and practice. In theory, Hillman is countering the tendency of much psychological theorising to reinforce the ego's perspective, by ignoring, trivialising or denying other realities and psychic voices. In his practice, Hillman wants to develop Jung's method of ‘active imagination’ as a way of engaging with, and more crucially, allowing an autonomous existence to the other figures in the human psyche.

He points out that it is precisely the Herculean and heroic nature of the ego, as one part of the human psyche, to assume for itself, what I called earlier in this section, the unified command structure of the psyche. He then makes the thought-provoking point that, when the ego is overly successful in its endeavour to deny and suppress the voices of other aspects of psychic life, the effect on the psyche as a whole is, in another of Freud's famous phrases, a “return of the repressed”. That is, the other aspects of the psyche

refuse to be banished and return in symptoms often experienced by the ego as disturbing and troublesome. Paradoxically in trying to repress multiplicity, hold itself at the centre of the psyche, and hold the psyche together, the ego creates the very conditions for psychic fragmentation it is trying to guard against. In the much-quoted two lines from the W.B.Yeats poem (1924), “The Second Coming”;

“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.”

In fully honouring multiplicity, Hillman wants to resist simplistic interpretations of Jung’s idea of individuation, what he calls (1971), “the popular vision of individuation from chaos to order, from multiplicity to unity, and where the health of wholeness has come to mean the one dominating the many.”

He is not, as people make a similar claim against postmodernism, advocating moral relativism. He wants to overturn the assumed moral superiority of monotheism and offer instead the model he finds in Greek mythology of “disintegrated integration”, that is to emphasise the paradox of the singular and multiple nature of the self. He quotes approvingly Lopez’s dictum: “The many contains the unity of the one without losing the possibilities of the many.”

Again we find another paradox - of the one and the many - at the heart and conclusion of this section. This is the paradox that also appeared at the beginning of this section in the discussion on brain functioning – how, in Lancaster’s (1999) words “to reconcile the seeming unity in our experience of the world with the evident multiplicity of the modular brain”. In the next section I will explore the third of the oppositions shaping this chapter - that between a cognitive self and an embodied self.

Section 6. Cognitive vs. embodied

“If the body had been easier to understand, nobody would have thought that we had a mind.”

Richard Rorty. (1980)

The first section in this chapter argued that Descartes was a pivotal figure in the development of modernity as a whole and the shaping the modern self. His philosophy established the isolated thinking subject as the sole certain ground of all human knowledge. *Cogito ergo sum* - I think therefore I am. In section four, I focussed on the implications of this for the hugely influential way in which the subject was defined apart, and constituted separately, from the external social and natural world – the subject/object dualism.

In this section, I want to focus on the implications of Cartesian philosophy for its structuring of a further highly influential dualism into enlightenment thinking and from that into western sensibilities, that of the mind and body. Descartes made a fundamental and profound separation between the mental experience of the thinking human subject, which he called *res cogitans*, and the world of matter, which included both the external world of nature and the human body, termed *res extensa*. *Res cogitans* was made of a spiritual substance and nonmaterial in nature. *Res extensa* existed in physical extended space and was subject to the laws of geometry and mathematics. And, for Descartes, like Newton after him, these mathematical laws were God-given metaphysical truths. Descartes said, as translated by Wallace (1910); “The metaphysical truths styled eternal have been established by God, and like the rest of his creation, depend entirely on him.”

Summarising Descartes’ dualism, Tarnas (1991) says:

“Hence on one side of Descartes dualism, soul is understood as mind, and human awareness as distinctively that of the thinker. The senses are prone to flux and error, the imagination prey to fantastic distortion, the emotions irrelevant for certain rational comprehension. On the other side of the dualism, and in contrast to mind, all objects of the external world lack subjective awareness, purpose, or spirit.” (p. 278).

I have already posited the human alienation, disenchantment of the world, and grounds for an exploitative relationship with nature leading to the current environmental crises, that such a philosophy can lead to. In this section I want to focus on the implications for the view of the relationship between mind and body that this position creates and explore alternative ways in which different ideas of the self conceive the body/mind relationship. I am not here setting out to analyse in depth or to solve the body/mind problem. That has long been, and is likely to remain, the subject of much philosophical, linguistic, psychological, neurological, biological and biochemical inquiry. I am interested

though in setting out the views of some of the thinkers who are trying to overcome the legacy of the Cartesian worldview which still tends to shape the frame of reference in which this debate is conducted.

Of all the, what I have been calling the natural and common-sense ideas of the self - the mesh of concepts that emphasise its separate, singular, cognitive, and literal nature which unreflectively create the habitual ways we have come to experience ourselves – the idea of a primarily cognitive self has been the most contested. The whole field of humanistic psychology and psychotherapy has developed in part as a reaction against the primarily mental, verbal and insight based formulations and focus of traditional psychoanalysis and the positivistic assumptions and methods of conventional academic and experimental psychology.

Jung and Reich are two significant figures who have been influential in moving psychology significantly away from a focus on the rational cognitive self. Though originally pupils of Freud, they both ultimately broke, not just their personal relationship with Freud, but also with the underlying Cartesian, nineteenth century scientific and mechanistic world view that continued to shape Freud's thought throughout his life. For Reich, body and psyche were functionally identical. His work (1949) on the formation of character structure indicated how psychological structures are both rooted in the body in the form of muscular tensions and simultaneously expressed in aspects of personality. Neither the body nor the personality attitudes, behaviours and emotions were primary in terms of causing the other – they were created simultaneously through the interaction of the developing child with its family and wider environment. Likewise, Jung thought there was a common reality underlying both the physical world of matter and the human psyche. Richard Grey (1996) summarising Jung's worldview, says: "In the Jungian universe, not only are the physical and psychic aspects of reality mutually conditioned by an underlying transcendental level, but both are mutually codetermined on the physical level" (p14). Jung, using the terminology of the alchemists, first called this underlying reality the *Unus Mundus*. He later changed his description to the 'objective psyche'.

A whole proliferation of integrative, body-based and transpersonal psychotherapies, as well as spiritual practices which link eastern meditation with western psychology, have now sprung up which emphasise the holistic nature of psychological life and aim to work with the physical, behavioural, emotional and mental dimensions of the self. Similarly, in the field of complementary medicine, practitioners are challenging the Cartesian

inheritance of the primarily mechanistic model of the body, which remains the dominant paradigm in conventional medicine, and emphasising instead the links between physical illness and mental and emotional health.

As I indicated in section one of this chapter, these more holistic ideas have moved from the fringes of the culture to the mainstream. Most people now think of their mental, physical and emotional health as related. And yet, especially within the field of cognitive psychology, and embedded in many of the underlying assumptions underpinning organisational theory, present for example in the work of Senge (1990) with his emphasis on 'mental models', we encounter the primary model of human functioning as a form of information processing that privileges rationality and representation.

With the development of sophisticated computer technology, such models are no longer crudely, mechanistically based on the metaphor of the clock, as was popular following Descartes, but are based on analogies drawn from digital technology. It is ironic, as shown by Capra (1996), in his discussion of the history of cybernetics, that initially computer technology was developed using, as its basis, an understanding of how the brain and human nervous system operated. Then the principles underlying the technological innovations in the design of digital computers were fed back to become the prevailing model of human mental functioning. In this way the machine metaphor, albeit a digital rather than clockwork machine, re-established itself as the central organising metaphor for the brain.

Capra says, writing about the development of open systems thinking and cybernetics in the fifties and sixties:

"The computer model of mental activity became the prevalent view of cognitive science and dominated all brain research for the next thirty years. The basic idea was that human intelligence resembles that of a computer to such an extent that cognition – the process of knowing – can be defined as information processing, i.e. as manipulation of symbols based on a set of rules. (p. 66)."

Such rule-based systems, as well as being adopted by Artificial Intelligence researchers, linguists in the Chomskian tradition and cognitive scientists, have also been influential in the development of thinking about complexity. Computer simulations of bird flocking behaviour show how complex patterns of behaviour can be generated from the continual iteration of a few simple rules applied to a number of independently acting

agents. This has led some people to uncritically use these kinds of analogies and simulations to explain complex human behaviour. As Stacey (2000, 2001) and Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2000) show, this approach leads to an instrumental application of ideas from complexity theory to organisational life which simply reinforce the existing paradigm of engineered design and control, rather than seeing the potential in thinking from complexity to reshape the way we think about and act together in organisations. Models developed in complexity largely from computer simulations cannot be simply and unreflectively imported into the domain of human behaviour without considering and confronting the distinctiveness of complex human systems.

The work of Maturana and Varela (1980, 1987) offers a very different view of cognition to models based on information processing. Such models, as I have been arguing in this and the previous section, are based on the manipulation of symbols according to rules which involves mental representation of the world within the internal world of the subject. Thus an independent subject engages in a process of cognition or knowing that enables the world to be represented in the mind of the subject. The subject, their mind, the act of cognition and the external world are all pre-given and independently conceived. In addition, for Descartes, as I have shown, and for many following him, the nature of the mind of the cognitive subject is radically different from the matter of the external world, which is being apprehended in the act of cognition.

The theory of cognition proposed by Maturana and Varela links with their work mentioned in section four of this chapter on autopoiesis. This is defined as the capacity of living systems to continually create and sustain their pattern of organisation through a network of self-organising production processes in which each part of the network participates in the production of other parts of the network. Many different structures can be specified by the same overall pattern of organisation. Capra (1996), interpreting the work of Maturana and Varela, says that, in their way of thinking: "Cognition is the activity involved in the self-generation and self-perpetuation of autopoietic networks. In other words, cognition is the very process of life" (p. 259). A living system and its environment are therefore inextricably linked. Changes in the environment trigger structural changes in the living system through stimulating a rearrangement of the connectivity between the different parts of the network. This is referred to by Maturana and Varela as the 'structural coupling' of a living system with its environment. Perception, or cognition, does not internally represent an external, independently existing reality but specifies and shapes a reality through its own internal self-referencing circular organisation, that is, it 'brings forth a world'. A living system, because it already

has its own organisation, specifies which perturbations from the environment are potential triggers for change.

These ideas, as I also said in section four, challenge the Darwinian idea of an organism largely adapting to and reacting to its environment. They are also close to Reichian ideas of character structure (1949), mentioned at the beginning of this section. Reich saw character structure as arising from the continual ongoing process by which initial biological and personality dispositions of the person shape the way they interact with their environment, notably the key care givers in that immediate environment, and then the environmental response further shapes the individual's disposition and behaviour. Over time these repeated interactions generate overall patterns of relationship between the individual and their environment, which become internally structured into the personality organisation of the individual on both a physical and psychological level. Character structure is therefore a living embodiment of the individual's life history, which shapes but does not rigidly determine their future. The phenomenon, in which individuals recreate patterns of behaviour even when these are clearly dysfunctional and not consciously sought after, is well known to therapists and is often what brings people to seek therapeutic help. In transactional analysis it is called the individual's life-script, an overall organising narrative that the individual has created to make sense of their early experience, which is generally at a subconscious or unconscious level and functions to perpetuate the story they have told about themselves by reliving the basic dynamics of the story in their relationships with others and the world.

Returning to Maturana and Varela's work, and summing up what he calls their 'Santiago theory', Capra says;

"Cognition is an integral part of the way a living organism interacts with its environment. It does not react to environmental stimuli through a linear chain of cause and effect, but responds with structural changes in its nonlinear, organisationally closed, autopoietic network. This type of response enables the organism to continue its autopoietic organisation and thus to continue living in its environment. In other words, the organism's cognitive interaction with its environment is intelligent interaction. From the perspective of the Santiago theory, intelligence is manifest in the richness and flexibility of an organism's structural coupling." (p. 262).

I have gone into this at some length because, in the work of Maturana and Varela, I glimpse the groundwork and framework for a radically different view of the world. We are deeply habituated to thinking in the Newtonian-Cartesian framework of mental models of representation, direct linear relationships between cause and effect, and in which the process of cognition is divided between an already existing subject and a pre-given external world. It is therefore difficult to find an alternative language and framework, which indicates the way that in the process of knowing, mind and the world are simultaneously created. We constantly have to counter the influence and the central metaphor of the dominant frame of reference, which Varela et al (1991) vividly characterise as “a cognitive agent parachuted into a pre-given world.”

Again to quote Capra in support of the above paragraph:

“The Santiago theory provides, in my view, the first coherent scientific framework that really overcomes the Cartesian split. Mind and matter no longer appear to belong to two separate categories but are seen as representing merely different aspects, or dimensions, of the same phenomenon of life” (p. 170).

It is evident from this discussion that the process of cognition, which is simultaneously the process of knowing, which is also the process of life, is much broader than thinking. It involves the domains of perception, emotion and action. In fact, Varela (1991) describes cognition as ‘embodied action’. This linking of knowing with embodied action has profound consequences for epistemology and helps pave the way for an epistemology of practice.

Also, this theory, by broadening cognition to include the whole range of human experience, does not, in consequence, thereby restrict cognition to the brain. The entire structure, and all parts, of the body participate in cognition. This point is dramatically illustrated by the work of Candice Pert (1998) on peptides, a group of sixty to seventy macromolecules. In this work, Pert and her colleagues showed that peptides function to facilitate the interconnection of what had previously been thought of as three separate bodily systems – the nervous system, which has traditionally been associated with cognition, the endocrine system, associated with regulation and the immune system, associated with the body’s defence system. Pert proposes that, through the linkages created by peptide activity, these three systems are in effect one single psychosomatic network. She boldly states (1989): “I can no longer make any distinction between the brain and the body,” and; “White blood cells are bits of the brain floating around in the body.” Pert further discovered that, in Capra’s (1996) words, “peptides are the

biochemical manifestation of emotion”, and that it may even be possible that each specific peptide mediates a particular emotional state. As peptides are present throughout our bodies, particularly at points where the brain is connected to the different sensory systems, this indicates that all our perceptions, thoughts and bodily functions are emotionally coloured.

This is very close to Damasio’s neuroscientific work in which he highlights ‘Descartes Error’, as his book (1994), is titled, by showing that thinking never occurs in isolation apart from feeling and that thoughts are always coupled to and coloured by emotional states. Descartes separate realm, the *res cogitans*, of mental life, is not the watertight compartment he had postulated. Damasio links emotional states to the many different rhythms of the body, such as the rhythms of inhalation and exhalation, heart beating, brain wave oscillations, of digestion. He provides a direct link between the life of the mind and the life of the body, and therefore, like Varela, suggests that thought is always embodied. He also argues that, as living bodies have the capacity to resonate with one another – we are all familiar with being effected by other peoples’ emotional states – people are always being influenced, whether they are aware of it or not, by the physical bodies of others.

Having in this section explored the cognitive vs. embodied dimensions of ideas about the self, I want now to move on to discuss the final of the four oppositions that offer the framework for this chapter – concrete vs. fictional.

Section 7. Concrete vs. fictional

*A man is always a teller of tales;
he lives surrounded by his stories and
the stories of others; he sees everything
that happens to him through them,
and he tries to live his life as
if he were recounting it.*

Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea

The fictional nature of the self is, perhaps, the dimension of the self that is least familiar to what I have called the common sense view of the self. We tend to think of ourselves as concrete, definite and essential. We talk about discovering our real or true selves. We believe that we possess a distinctive personality. We think that the descriptions we use of other people and ourselves, as extrovert, shy, cunning, happy-go-lucky, rumbustuous, moody etc refer to something solid and distinctive. In this, of course, we are encouraged by the philosophy, marketing and methods of the whole industry of psychological and personality testing and measurement which takes it as axiomatic that each individual possesses something called personality which can be measured and assessed quantitatively.

At the basis of this characterisation of the self as personality which can be assessed along a number of dimensions, usually quantitative, lurks what we can call, following previous comments in this chapter, a modernist perspective on the self. This assumes that the self is separate and exists independently of the way it is being measured. In other words, that measurement is simply transcribing an objectively given unequivocally existing phenomenon, the self, rather than having an alternative constructionist understanding that the process of quantification and the theoretical assumptions behind this, are actually creating the self in its own image.

What, though, if the ideas we have of ourselves are fictions? What if we consider that the ways we describe ourselves and others are thought of as stories that we tell to ourselves and/or others, imaginative creations, rather than an empirically based description of something that exists independently of the telling of it? What if the approach to understanding the self was derived from literature and the novel rather than through scientific objectification, measurement, and assessment?

These are not necessarily new questions but they are now surfacing in a number of academic and professional disciplines as people explore the consequences of a narrative approach to the self in both theory and practice.

In the field of family therapy, an approach called narrative therapy has grown up based on the work of Michael White and David Epston. In their book, "Narrative Therapy", (1996), Freedman and Combs develop an approach to therapeutic practice based on two, what they call, 'guiding metaphors'. These metaphors are 'social construction', which has been outlined already in section four in this chapter, and 'narrative'. "Using the narrative metaphor", they say, " leads us to think about people's lives as stories and

to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and fulfilling.” Overall, Freedman and Combs characterise the fundamental shift in the way they now think about their therapeutic work as the move from systems to stories, which they see as a discontinuous paradigm change, not just an evolution of the systems based approach that had previously shaped their thinking and practice.

Freedman and Combs, like others influenced by a postmodern perspective, link their two ‘guiding metaphors’ by arguing that the way realities are socially constructed is through language, and, in particular, through the way people use language to tell and retell stories to themselves and one another. These stories express and embed social and political relationships. Freedman and Combs state that: “People are born into stories; their social and historical contexts constantly invite them to tell and remember the stories of certain events and to leave others unstored” (p. 42). Stories are not neutral. They positively connote or privilege certain actions, understandings, qualities and meanings and simultaneously devalue others. In their practice, Freedman and Coombs encourage their clients to surface and explore the stories that have come to shape their lives and the way they experience themselves. Then, as appropriate, especially if people have come to absorb and internalise oppressive stories about themselves, which are often gender and/or race based, their therapeutic practice enables people to retell their story.

From a thorough-going postmodern perspective, all theories are different kinds of stories. Science is not, therefore, from this perspective, the pinnacle of human knowledge and favoured overall model for assessing the grounds and claims for knowledge in all disciplines. Science, rather than being an overarching ‘metanarrative’, in the sense that Lyotard (1984) speaks of, which subjugates all other forms of knowing to its own criteria, is one of many narratives, each of which have their own autonomous ways of establishing validity. Science happens to be a particularly compelling story because the technologies deriving from the story work. Challenging science on the basis that it is one of many possible stories, rather than the master-story, is not to deny the efficacy of technology. As Gergen (1996) says; “It is not technological capability (or “knowing how”) that is called into question by postmodern critique, but the truth claims placed upon the accompanying descriptions and explanations (the “knowing that”)”. We live in a world of many realities, many truths and therefore many stories.

To recap the argument of this chapter in the terms being discussed in this section, (i.e. to retell, in brief, the story I am telling). The dominant story that has been told about

the self - once upon a time there was a modernist self that thought *cogito ergo sum* - is one that emphasises the self as a separate, singular, unified, thinking, concrete entity. Alternatively, we can tell other stories, and construct other theories, which tell the story of the self as a relational, multiple, decentred, embodied, fictional process. By elaborating the fictional dimension of the self, I am drawing attention to the storied nature of the self. I prefer to use the word 'fictional' as an alternative to the word 'concrete' in preference to 'storied', because it brings into play the creative role of imagination, which I will return to towards the end of this section.

I intend to build on the arguments already made in this chapter that we do not approach an already existing external reality but are engaged in both creating and making sense of that reality. A primary mode of making sense of the world, *par excellence*, is to use stories. We describe our experience in narrative terms. Many writers in the different fields of philosophy, education, religion, organisational theory, sociology and psychology have argued that the narrative mode is uniquely suited to being able to make sense of our experience.

For one thing, the narrative mode is temporally based. It provides a way of making sense of lived experience over time. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1980) said that temporality is "that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity and narrativity is the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent." In other words the experience of living through time and the experience of living through story are intimately related and interdependent.

Similarly, the reality of the experience of time is an important part of the work (1962) of Dewey, the philosopher and educationalist. Dewey saw individuality, with its inherent possibilities for novelty and unexpectedness, as only possible over time. He says; "The human individual is himself a history, a career, and for this reason his biography can be related only as a temporal event." Interestingly the scientist, Prigogine (1984, 1997) has made the way that mechanistic scientific thinking has erroneously discounted time one of the central arguments in his critique of the prevailing philosophy of science in which he stresses the irreversibility of time, the unidirectionality of 'time's arrow' as he terms it, in contrast to the way normal science assumes that its laws are timeless and eternal.

Following Dewey's lead, other educational researchers have stressed the role of story in education. Dixon and Stratta (1986), view narrative as a primary act of mind and an essential way of making sense of human experience. Connelly and Clandinin state

(1990) “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives.” In their more recent work (1999), they say, in reviewing the way they have come to understand the newly emergent studies of teachers as knowledge creators:

“Increasingly, as our work progressed, we came to see teacher knowledge in terms of narrative life history, as storied life compositions. These stories, these narratives of experience are both personal – reflecting a person’s life history – and social – reflecting the milieu, the contexts in which teachers live.” (p. 2).

In religious studies, there is a branch of theology called narrative theology. Michael Novak has argued (1971) that religion “is the telling of a story with one’s life” and that, therefore, “in this weak sense, all men and women are religious.” The bible has been made into a film called ‘The Greatest Story ever told’. Don Cupitt, a postmodern theologian, also takes the view (1991), that, “because we live in language and live in time, we must tell stories”, and that, “a human being is entirely culturally formed, and made of stories through and through.”

The sociologist Arthur Frank (1995) has written persuasively about the kinds of stories that are told in illness. He shows how the stories told about illness reflect the different interests of those telling them. He is keen to restore to those who become ill the voice of their own story, which speaks of their unique experience. He sees this being taken away from them by the dominant voices in narratives of illness, those of the medical professions. He terms the dominant medical voice, which emphasises the active heroic role of the doctors and the ‘wonder’ drugs of the pharmaceutical companies, and the correspondingly passive role of the patient in their own treatment, as the ‘restitution narrative’.

He argues, using a marvellously eloquent turn of phrase, that at times of serious illness, people are subject to ‘narrative wreckage’. That is, the story they have so far been making of their life is seriously and irrevocably disrupted by major illness. Frank’s writing is largely about physical, often life-threatening illnesses, such as cancer, but I think his reasoning is applicable to the wider context of significant psychological as well as physical trauma.

At the stage of the immediate onset and identification of illness, and in a condition of ‘narrative wreckage’, people are very vulnerable to the interpretations and definitions of their illness, offered and advocated by those assuming authority in this field, the medical

experts. Frank, points out that the nature of serious illness is such that, by so thoroughly breaking apart the pre-illness narrative, a period is occasioned in which people find it difficult to make any coherent, meaningful sense of their experience. He calls this type of story a 'chaos narrative', which, by definition, resists being brought into any orderly form. An innovative literary example of this is provided by Glen Duncan in his powerful and disturbing novel, 'Love Remains' (2000). Although writing about the rape and near-murder, rather than physical illness, of Chloe, one of his two leading characters, Duncan tries to convey Chloe's experience, through the splintered nature of his writing in the third section of the novel. It is a mark of his skill as a writer that he is successful in imaginatively recreating for the reader, as they struggle to make sense of the almost incoherent fragments of text, the appalling and chaotic nature of her experience.

In contrast to the two narratives so far defined, the 'restitution narrative' and the 'chaos' narrative, Frank adds a third narrative, the 'quest narrative'. In this narrative, the meaning-making of the illness is returned to the agency of the person with the illness, rather than lying with the medical agencies. Frank says:

"Only in quest stories does the teller have a story to tell.....Restitution stories are about the triumph of medicine; they are self-stories only by default. Chaos stories remain the sufferer's own story, but the suffering is too great for a self to be told." (p. 115).

The narrative shape of the quest story that emerges in illness and its aftermath is often described as a journey. Frank compares this narrative structure to that found in Joseph Campbell's (1972) classic work on 'The Hero With a Thousand Faces' with its three stages of departure, initiation and return. Frank is careful, though, not to over-romanticise illness or to turn quest stories into traditional heroic narratives with their emphasis on the ability of the individual person to pull through by an effort of individual will and/or determination. He, also, in echoes of section five in this chapter on singularity and multiplicity, says: "Falling into the hubris that one's voice can ever be entirely one's own is only one of the failures that quest stories risk"(p. 135). For Frank, like Freedman and Coombs, there is a social, political, and ethical dimension to story. Its emancipatory power lies in its potential to tell other stories that the mainstream narratives, as identified with the medical professions in Frank's work, make marginal or obliterate. Frank says: "Post-colonialism in its most generalised form is the demand to speak rather than being spoken for and to represent oneself rather than being

represented, or in the worst cases, rather than being effaced entirely” (p. 13). As I have been arguing, stories are a prime medium in which to speak and represent oneself.

The psychologist Jerome Bruner has also written extensively (1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1990) on the theme of narrative knowledge. He argues, in opposition to those who see mental life as essentially akin to information processing, (as was discussed in the previous section), that there are two fundamentally distinct modes of thought, which he calls the ‘paradigmatic mode’ and the ‘narrative mode’. These modes of thought function not just in the realm of purely mental activity but as ways of experiencing and making sense of the world, and also as forms of memory. The paradigmatic mode (1987) “leads to good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis”. The narrative mode leads to “good stories, gripping drama, believable historical accounts.” He connects the narrative mode to the way we actually live our lives. “A life as led”, he says (1987), “is inseparable from a life as told.”

Bruner (1990) distinguishes five key features of narrative expression. These are, first, what he terms, its ‘inherent sequentiality’, which is closely related to the idea of temporality, discussed earlier. Narrative creates meaning over time, not necessarily in a linear, chronological way but through linking different constituent parts into an overall sequence. This sequence is commonly called the plot. The second feature of narrative is its capacity to treat fact and fiction on equal terms. The overall power of the story, as exemplified by the Latin American magical realist writers, is not diminished by the coincidence of truth and falsity, as judged by the methods and logic of empirical science. The third feature of narrative is that it, in Bruner’s words, “specialises in the forging of links between the exceptional and the ordinary.” Bruner understands this as one way in which any culture has to handle the dilemma of being able to create overall norms and also deal with exceptions to those norms. The fourth feature of narratives is their dramatic quality and for Bruner, following Burke (1945), drama relates to what is (p. 50) “morally valued, morally appropriate, or morally uncertain.” Finally, the fifth feature of narratives, and what also gives them their power and relevance as a way of organising experience, is their ability to use language, what Bruner calls the ‘power of tropes’. In so doing, a story creates itself so that it has to be interpreted. Its meaning cannot be deduced or inferred by logic alone. It is always ambiguous, open to different interpretations.

Having outlined the work of a number of thinkers who have understood the idea and construction of the self as a storied self, and also explored the work of others who have

legitimated and contrasted narrative forms of knowing with more traditional forms, I want to turn, as I have in other sections, to the work of James Hillman to elucidate further the fictional nature of the self. I will outline his ideas in some detail as I think that, of all the writers in this field, his work stands firmly against the dominant Cartesian tradition and clearly and rigorously articulates the multiple, decentred and fictional nature of the self.

I have already indicated that Hillman, although describing himself at times as a depth psychologist, has a very different vision of psychology than most other psychological theorists - whether Freudian, cognitive, humanistic, transpersonal developmental or behaviourist. One of his aims is to restore soul to psychology. Hillman, in a tradition which follows Heraclitus, Plato, the neo-Platonists, Ficino and Jung, has a very particular understanding of soul. In his book 'Revisioning Psychology' (1975), Hillman comments on three features of soul;

"First, soul refers to the deepening of events into experiences; second, the significance soul makes possible, whether in love or in religious concern, derives from its special relation with death. And third, by soul I mean the imaginative possibility in our natures, the experiencing through reflective speculation, dream, image and fantasy – that mode which recognises all realities as primarily symbolic or metaphorical."

It is the connecting of soul with imagination and Hillman's view of the imaginative foundation of all realities, scientific and otherwise, that he refers to as the 'poetic basis of mind', that I want to explore further.

In his book, *Healing Fiction* (1983), when reviewing the case histories of Freud, the founder of modern psychology, Hillman argues that, essentially in these case histories, Freud is writing fiction. He thinks psychoanalysis, and psychology in general, practices an enormous misplaced literalism, which takes ideas advanced by Freud in the literary form of his case studies, and reifies them into the abstract generalisations and over-literalised diagnostic categories of an empirical science. He understands Freud, in order to gain acceptance within the medical establishment for his work at the time he was writing, as having to bridge two worlds – the world of the humanities and the world of the sciences – and in so doing, Freud creates a new genre, the case history. The case history has to be both a literary construction, (and it is no accident that Freud's major award in his lifetime was the Goethe prize for literature), and a scientific treatise. And Freud deploys

in his case histories all the rhetorical devices of a good storyteller. It is these narrative techniques and style, which makes the case histories such intriguing and compelling reading. In other words, Freud is creating these case studies as stories, and “ever since”, as Hillman says : “We are all in this field of psychotherapy, not medical empiricists but workers in story” (p. 9).

Hillman wants to take case history as fictional story seriously and to examine case history using the methods developed by novelists and literary critics. Hillman quotes EM Forster ‘s work on ‘Aspects of the novel’ (1927) to explain the difference between story and plot. Forster said that;

“A plot is...a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. “The king died and then the queen died,” is a story. “The king died and then the queen died of grief,” is a plot. A story answers what happened next, a plot tells us why.”

Having differentiated story from plot, and emphasised the role of plot in explaining human intentions, Hillman now makes a number of bold moves. The first is to argue that in Freud’s and others’ psychological case histories, the plot is equivalent to the main psychological theory that the case study is demonstrating. The case histories are assembled and the details crafted together to provide as their underlying plot the theories advanced by the author. “And Freud’s plot”, Hillman says (p. 10), “was absolutely economical: no loose ends. This economy in plot is called elegance in theorising.” Hillman contrasts the Freudian plot, which always has the same answer to the question ‘why’ with the Jungian plot of individuation that is much more varied and multiplistic. In other words, and this is Jung’s, amongst others, criticism of him, Freud is too reductive. The complexity of human life is reduced to one dominating story, the struggle between the life and death instincts, the kind of grand unifying story capable of explaining everything, that the postmodernists, following Lyotard (1984), would term a ‘metanarrative’.

Having shown that Freud was engaged in the double task of writing both story and science, Hillman makes a further point about Freud’s writing, which is important because it bears on the nature of validity:

“But for us who read him, it is important to bear in mind that our fundamental unease with Freud's theory is not that it cannot be verified but that it does not satisfy. We fail to fall for it not because it empirically fails as a hypothesis about human nature, but because it fails poetically, as a deep enough, embracing enough, aesthetic enough plot for providing dynamic coherence and meaning to the dispersed narratives of our lives” (p. 11).

Although this is not the main focus of his argument, Hillman is making a significant point about different kinds of validity, which is echoed in ideas about different modes of knowing. He is saying that we do not reject the Freudian enterprise from the criteria of what constitutes good science, as others, notably Popper (1959) have done, by claiming that psychoanalysis fails to meet the test of falsifiability, but from other criteria, which are narrative, aesthetic and hermeneutically based.

Hillman goes on to make a second bold move. This is to identify plot with myth. He says that Freud, too, in his formulation of the Oedipus complex, identified plot with myth, but, in so doing, limited all the potential stories, all the twists and turns of Greek mythology to this one myth only of Oedipus. Hillman does credit Freud, though, with making this move to myth. He says that Freud, “placed mind on a poetic basis. He understood that the entire narrative of a human life, the characters we are and the dreams we enter, are structured by the selective logic of a profound mythos on the psyche” (p. 11).

Hillman is therefore suggesting, like others in this section, that psychological theorising is a form of story telling which finds a distinctive expression in the case history. In addition, by linking story to plot and thereby to myth, Hillman is tracing the archetypal roots of these stories, and locating them in a very different tradition to the postmodernists. He sees the diagnostic categories of psychiatry as offering particular stories to people that may offer a coherent way of organising their experience and so telling their story. He points out that, as well as offering by and large pejorative, potentially oppressive stories these categories also take themselves literally, that is they fail to recognise the fictional basis of their origins and assume they are factual, real accounts and explanations of behaviour. For Hillman this is the real danger of these diagnostic categories. Not so much the way that they fit their patient into a prevailing story, or overall discourse, to use Foucault's term, but that they disguise the essentially poetic or imaginative basis of mind. The injury is to the soul and the imagination as much as the dignity and self-worth of the individual.

Hillman wants to show how, since the beginning of psychology with Freud, all psychology in its nature is fictional. He wants to see through the ways that psychology and other theories construct their worlds and point out the archetypal structures that lie at the basis of this. He is advocating a psychological attitude to the world, not in the normal way we might understand this, but as a stance that links imagination with soul-making. He points out that by claiming that all psychology is fictional, it does not thereby render it invalid or ineffective. Like others interested in what they might call re-storying lives, or what others again might term re-framing, and what he would call re-imagining, Hillman wants to ask the further question generated from this perspective - what are the kinds of fiction that heal?

Part of his answer is provided when he says (p. 17) that; "Successful therapy is thus a collaboration between fictions, a revisioning of the story into a more intelligent, more imaginative plot, which also means the sense of mythos in all the parts of the story." Therapy is therefore healing when it promotes the telling of a richer, more intelligent story, which has its roots deep in relevant cultural myths. I think Maturana and Varela, using a very different language could be making a related point when they say, as explained by Capra (1996), and quoted already in section four; "From the perspective of the Santiago theory, intelligence is manifest in the richness and flexibility of an organism's structural coupling."

Hillman points out that therapy, rather than encompassing the entire range of genres within which stories have been situated, tends to limit itself to four main kinds of story that can be told; the epic, comic, detective and social realist story. Speaking self-critically on behalf of psychotherapy, he says: "We take what comes - no matter how passionate and erotic, how tragic and noble, how freakish and arbitrary - and turn it all into one of four modes" (p. 18).

Here, as elsewhere in his work. Hillman is arguing for the fluidity, indeterminacy and multiplicity of imagination and arguing against its reduction and typification in this case to four main stories, but this could equally well be against any of the many models, which attempt to neatly categorise human experience.

The other part of his answer to the question of what fiction heals, is provided in his overall view of therapy. For Hillman, therapy is not so much focussed on cure as a final goal but is a way to reawaken the imagination, to pick up and re-create the oral tradition

for story telling, to re-story life. He thinks that people who have a history and childhood culture of story telling are in “better shape” than those who have not been so exposed. Like followers of the German philosopher and educationalist, Rudolf Steiner, he believes the imagination is stimulated differently through words than from the moving pictures of film and television. “Pictures we perceive with our sense perception”, he says, “images we imagine”. He refers to Edward Casey’s work (1974) on the phenomenology of imagination to argue that image is not rooted in the specific content of what we envision but is linked to the overall way we see. We can see from different perspectives but we limit ourselves in the range of perspectives available and we are, furthermore, often unaware of how the perspective we see from frames what we are seeing.

For Hillman, the forms, which organise our imagination and therefore our approach to the world, including ourselves, are the archetypes as put forward throughout Jung’s work. Hillman links these archetypes to the different Greek gods. Again, he is indicating the mythological basis of thought by linking the archetypes to the cultural mythology, which has shaped western thinking from the Greeks onwards. He is suggesting that the genres in which we tell our stories, and in which psychology writes its case studies, are shaped by the particular God informing and underlying the perspective. He says, about this, in relation to his colleagues in psychology, that:

“The idea that there is a god in our tellings and that this God shapes the words into the very syntax of a genre is not new in literary studies even if it might come as a shock to my colleagues who really believe that they are only writing clinical accounts of facts.” (p. 23).

He further puts forward the highly interesting suggestion that the structure of narrative itself favours the perspective and concerns of the ego because narrative is almost always cast in the genre of the hero archetype. He takes this idea from a paper by Patricia Berry (1982), in which she argues that;

“The most important difficulty with narrative: it tends to become the ego’s trip. The hero has way of finding himself in the midst of any story. He can turn anything into a parable of a way to make it and stay on top. The continuity in a story becomes his ongoing heroic movement.”

This theme is echoed in Maclure’s (1996) notion of the ‘victory narrative’. It is also nearly always present in accounts of organisational change. The heroic leader, senior

management team, consultant, or even whole organisational system as hero, seizes their destiny and transforms itself. It is ever-present too in self-help manuals and the personal accounts, which often go side-by-side with these manuals, telling of extraordinary achievements and the overcoming of obstacles from an initial position of acute disadvantage. This is not to subvert or trivialise courage, but rather to look with a more critical awareness at the overall narrative stance, which configures a perspective in which courage plays such a crucial role.

I have gone into Hillman's ideas at length because his writing places imagination at its heart. It profoundly connects to the theme of this section where I am arguing that the ideas we have of ourselves are fictional constructs. That is fictional not in the rather pejorative sense that word can carry of meaning untrue or a lie, but fictional in the sense of being a work of imagination.

In her original, thought provoking and inspiring book, 'Invisible Guests' (1986), Mary Watkins works with Hillman's and others' ideas to critically explore the way key theorists in developmental psychology such as Freud, Piaget, Vygotsky and Mead have conceptualised and understood the purpose and development of the imagination. Although not writing within or referring to a postmodern tradition, and not mentioning Kuhn (1970), she constructs a strong case for the relativisation of human knowledge, and argues that all so called data or empirical facts are inevitably theory-laden. Within her own field of developmental psychology, she contends that all observations of child and adult development are inherently rooted in a theory, which selects, directs attention to, and interprets, what is deemed relevant and significant. She quotes approvingly Kaplan's (1981) view that "there is no single "developmental course" or "sequence" in an individual's life. With different teloi, the relevant developmental "sequence" will be different." In other words each theory chooses as its focus what that focus and purpose considers significant but then tends to universalise what is always a partial perspective. So, for example, Piaget's theories want to universalise the development of logic as the primary developmental task for the child turning all children into 'budding scientists', whereas for Freud the demands of adapting to an unsympathetic reality is the overriding purpose of maturation.

She shows how nearly all the major theorists in developmental psychology share an overall perspective, which devalues imagination. The ideas of Piaget, Freud, Vygotsky and Mead, all highly influential developmental theorists, tend to see imagination in childhood as being superseded by a developmentally more mature mode of thinking, in which

Watkins says (p60), “development coincides with increasing realism.” Imagination is seen as a primitive, inferior mode which occurs en route to the superior mode of logical abstract reason (Piaget) or a defensive mode of psychic functioning developed to compensate for the frustrations encountered in facing a harsh reality (Freud) or as way of testing and rehearsing alternative solutions before acting (Mead). Watkins follows the argument developed in earlier sections of this chapter in arguing against representational theories of reality, what Hillman calls (1975) ‘the naturalistic fallacy’, in which the images conjured up in imagination are judged according to how well they copy external reality. In contrast, Watkins says: “As soon as we allow that the image represents something other than the external, realism is no longer the measure, but rather the fit between the symbol and the symbolised” (p. 60).

Watkins, like Hillman, refers to Casey’s study (1976) of the phenomenology of imagination. Casey argues that imagination tends to be theoretically conceived in one of three ways. First, and most commonly, following Plato, as subordinate to other faculties where, as Watkins says, “images are only imitations of imitations”. Secondly, as a “mediator between perception, sensation and intellect (Aristotle, Hobbes, Kant)”; and thirdly, in German Romanticism, as “superordinate to all faculties including reason itself.” Casey, himself, rather than being caught up in trying to argue for the correctness of one of these views, makes the more interesting move of contesting the basis on which imagination is being hierarchically ordered, either at the top or the bottom. He wants to develop a perspective on imagination in which it is (p. 19) “nonderivative, as a phenomenon to be evaluated in its own terms”. He wants to resist the idea of creating a unilateral relationship between imagination and other faculties. Watkins says (p. 49) that his approach to imagination leads to a way of “finding a multiplicity of relations among imagining, remembering, feeling, knowing, and sensing.” In the next line, she goes on; “Were all instances of imagining to be forced because of a *prejuge du monde* into a single continuum of value, the multiplicity would be falsely narrowed and homogenised.”

Watkins, too, like the other theorists mentioned in section five, is arguing for the multiplicity of the self, in which imagination is neither primitive and inferior nor superior but is both one of many modes and capable of shifting, different relations at different times with other modes. She, like Mead, Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Shotter sees the mind or psyche as inherently multiple and dialogically structured. She wants to value the dialogues with others that are imaginatively constituted in their own right and not just see such imaginary dialogues as a way station to a more reality-based logical or social functioning. Whilst valuing Mead for his recognition of the way that self and other are

dialogically built into mind, she is critical of how, in his theory, the multiplicity of dialogue with many different others, real and imaginary, becomes developmentally transformed into the singular 'generalised other'. Hence Mead follows others in privileging a singular, albeit socially derived, unity. She says, in her critique of Mead:

"For Mead, imaginal others symbolise absent actual others; the imaginal is an internalisation of social reality, whose purpose is adaptation to and preparation for social reality. When the imaginal is seen in this way, as merely a station between two moments of time in social reality, other functions of imaginal others are surely neglected. Looked at in other ways, particularisation of the other is at the same time a refining of the symbol"(p. 56).

Watkins, like Hillman in following Jung, wants to take seriously the idea of the imaginal other, and grant autonomy to such figures. She refers extensively to the work of many novelists and poets who talk about how, if their work is to have greater complexity, insight and aesthetic integrity, the characters in their work cannot be completely ruled by them but need to develop their own independence. Wallace Stevens (1978) poem, "Credences of Summer", states that "the characters speak because they want to speak." Gorky (1920) also says that Tolstoy criticises him on the basis that: "Most of what you say comes out of yourself, and therefore you have no characters, and all your people have the same face." Dostoevsky was devastated, and also fearful of the censor, when his character Ivan, in the *Brothers Karamazov*, developed a compelling and systematic argument against the existence of God. In the same vein, Watkins also refers to the trend in twentieth century novels to move away from a narrative, which centralises an omniscient narrator. Both these tendencies are beautifully illustrated in John Fowles' (1966) well-known novel, *'The French Lieutenant's Woman'*, in which rather than determine her overall fate as author, Fowles creates two alternative endings for the main character.

Watkins is a fierce advocate for the autonomy of the psyche's imaginal figures. She does not want them reduced theoretically or in practice to the ego's projections and thereby colonised or reabsorbed as part of ego or self. By allowing them their own existence as genuinely and radically other, they can therefore, as Mead shows through the dialogic way in which self and other are co-created, influence the self. As Watkins says (p. 68): "These imaginal persons bring us up as surely as our parents, not simply as substitutes for our parents, but as companions in imaginal worlds." The human capacity to personify, to create these kinds of imaginal figures, is not a process which, as

psychoanalysis would lead us to believe, is necessarily superseded in maturity. In fact, Watkins sees the development of increasingly differentiated, more complex figures as a sign of psychic health. Her developmental telos and focus is not the passing away of these figures either into a reality-oriented process of imageless logic nor their integration under the rule of the ego but a greater tolerance for the multiplicity of the psyche with greater facility for dialogue between the different figures. For Watkins, therefore, the self is not established with the ego at its centre, as in humanistic and Freudian psychology, but, is instead defined, in a suggestive and subtle phrase, as “an organisation of perspectives”.

Watkins is careful to show how her perspective does not lead, as psychoanalytically oriented theorists could suppose, to either a fracturing of the self or an increase in multiple personality disorders. In fact, she argues that the problematic issue within multiple personality disorders is precisely that the different personalities do not engage with one another. They exist separately. In contrast, Watkins wants to encourage dialogue and relationship between the different personalities including the ego. She says:

“It is paradoxical that the illness of multiple personality is problematic precisely because of its singleness of voice at any one moment, not because of its multiplicity. Improvement starts when dialogue and reflection between the selves begins to happen, when there is multiplicity in a single moment of time, rather than multiplicity over time.” (p. 104).

I have outlined Watkins ideas and quoted her at some length, as I did Hillman, because I think they both show that as we take imagination as a valid, important mode of being in the world, as we allow autonomy to the figures that imagination personifies, as we become more cognisant of the multiplicity of figures within us, and as we allow the ego to become less central, we fundamentally, as is the theme of this chapter, revision and re-imagine ourselves.

Watkins resonates with the postmodern stance that has also been outlined in this chapter, when, in talking about the consequences of decentering and relativising the ego, she says: “Truth becomes redefined: it is not the province of a single voice, but arises between the voices at the interfaces of the character’s multiple perspectives” (p. 118). Like Gergen and others, she is making truth a relational rather than absolute property. Truth is to be found in relationship - not just in the self’s relationship with other selves but also within the internal relationships and dialogues that are possible within a more

fictionalised, less literal self, one, which can hold opposites together – for example, both the ‘unbearable lightness of being’ and the darkness of Saturnian melancholy.

In Watkins’ encapsulating statement in the preceding paragraph, we have indeed come a long way from Descartes’ vision of over three hundred years ago urging us to find truth and certainty in the solitary functioning of the isolated individual mind. Rather than this tradition culminating in the rampant individualism of unregulated market economics, or the extreme anguish of existential despair, or the depths of the postmodern nihilistic abyss, or the narcissism of a celebrity obsessed culture, we can find a way out of the restrictions of modernity through perspectives’ like Watkins and others in this chapter, which indicate and celebrate a more relational, multi-faceted, embodied, and imaginative sense of the self.

Section 8. Concluding comments

The preceding sections have explored and outlined different ideas about the self. In doing this, I have used four oppositions - separate vs. relational, singular vs. plural, cognitive vs. embodied and concrete vs. fictional. These oppositions have provided a framework to situate and organise material from many different sources, not just psychology but also philosophy, sociology, literature, linguistics, science and popular culture. These oppositions have further been used to structure my overall argument in that I am claiming that the first of each of these oppositions is emphasised in the dominant discourses about the self, both at an everyday folk-psychology level, and also in the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin this discourse.

It is tempting to argue that instead of a separate, singular, cognitive, concrete self, what I want to put forward is the notion of a relational, multiple, embodied, fictional self. And to some extent, I do indeed want to put this forward. The danger, though, of such a position is that the first term of all four oppositions is simply replaced by the second term. From this we can create the kind of table that will be very familiar to readers of management literature contrasting one usually outmoded style of management or way of working or organisational culture or organisational form to another more favourable contemporary style.

In the case of this chapter's argument we could construct a table just so.

From	To
Separate	Relational
Apart	Together with
Dualistic	Non-dualistic
Singular	Multiple
Centered	Decentered
Ego in charge	Ego relativised
Hierarchical	Networked
Cognitive	Embodied
Primarily thinking	Thinking feeling and acting
Concrete	Fictional
Real	Imaginal
Objectified	Personified

The problem with such a table and this way of thinking is that it remains within the either/or framework of traditional Aristotelian logic, which I referred to in section three. A point Watkins (1986) makes is very relevant here, when she is talking in the context of different views of art and their relationship to developmental psychology and imaginal dialogues:

"These theories are not presented as incompatible viewpoints to be chosen between, but as perspectives which allow us to see more of the complexity of the phenomenon of art. Indeed, this is our own aim with respect to imaginal dialogues – not to pit one theory against another with the hope of taking a last fall, but to see if we can begin to move freely among viewpoints which have been banished from our developmental theorising, as well as those sustained by our present conceptions." (p. 59)

Likewise, I am putting forward these alternative perspectives on the self not just to 'pit' one against the other, and re-privilege their relations, but to suggest instead that these genuinely contradictory perspectives on the self point to something very important

about the self – its essentially paradoxical nature. That is, within the self, separateness and relationship, singularity and multiplicity, cognition and embodiment, concreteness and fictionality, all simultaneously co-exist.

In attempting to understand the nature of the self we are faced with these and other paradoxes. In Zohar's (1990) work, for example, the paradox of self as both 'particle and wave' is the main paradox to receive attention. Other paradoxes are; that the self is both, in Watkins (1986) phrase, "the organisation of perspectives" and the different perspectives themselves; that the self is both at the centre and at the boundary; that the self is both the organising principle and the result of its organisation; that the self is both the process and the product of itself. Moreover, as I outlined in section three, from the perspective of complexity theory, it is precisely these paradoxical qualities that lend the self its vitality, its capacity to change, to learn, to adapt, to self-organise to create new emergent forms for itself at the "edge of chaos".

It is, finally, this fundamentally paradoxical quality that helps retain the essential mystery of the self, which means, as Heraclitus says of the soul (Wheelwright, 1959);

"You could not discover the limits of the soul, even if you travelled every road to do so; such is the depth of its meaning."

Postscript

Having largely written this chapter in November 2001, I followed my practice of 'showing my work to others' and sent this writing to a number of people. The responses were very positive.

Patricia Shaw, Visiting Professor at the University of Hertfordshire, commented:

"This is an impressive chapter, quite a tour de force. So densely interwoven that it is difficult to pick apart and I wouldn't want to. The really interesting thing is how this relates to other parts of your writing. Are you going to make some explicit connection or let them stand side by side? Anyway it is meaty, stimulating stuff. You manage to 'review the literature,' usually so dull, in a racy, provocative' passionate way, with real fluency."

Andy Smith, my colleague and room-mate at Roffey Park first referred to a quote from a novel he had been reading:

“And he who wields the white wild magic gold
is a paradox –
for he is everything and nothing,
hero and fool,
potent and helpless –
and with one world of truth or treachery
he will save or damn the Earth
because he is mad and sane,
cold and passionate’
lost and found

The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant The Unbeliever – Stephen Donaldson

He then went on to say:

It just so happened I was re-reading these books when I got your paper and it seemed to me there were lots of connections. Although I have to say the books are lightweight compared with your effort. Cos, wow you certainly know how to pack it in. What I mean is there is so much content in each sentence and it all or most of it to me made sense to me. But I'm not sure my speed reading techniques would work on this piece!

I think this is an incredibly thought provoking piece which brings together a whole range of thinking and disciplines. I just thought it was an immense effort. I am pretty convinced by your arguments and it also caused me as your writing always does to reflect on my on practice and selves. Here are some of my thoughts as they occurred.....”

My supervisor Jack Whitehead commented, in an email dated 23rd November 2001:

“Really enjoyed your chapter on Ideas of the Self. Very powerful,
Clearly argued, exciting ideas, a most scholarly approach to engaging with the ideas of other. A real treat.

You brought me to the edge of what can be communicated through propositional discourse. You pointed out the limitations of propositional, scholarly discourse, in creatively engaging with the tensions, conflicts, paradoxes and contradictions in your opposites.”

As well as responding appreciatively when I showed him the writing in this chapter, Jack Whitehead also posed a challenge that gave me great food for thought and which continues to reverberate throughout this thesis.

His further question about this writing was:

“I’ll be fascinated to hear if it does help you to move onto being able to say what is important to you in your practice (as educator). Let’s check out the validity of my thinking that it won’t help you at all! I reckon that a move onto being able to say what is important to you in your practice as an educator will require a creative break with your propositional (mind) into a different epistemological and ontological relationship with your bodymind.”

I will return to this challenge later in chapter six after I have introduced other voices in addition to the ‘scholarly voice’ of this chapter.

Chapter Four

Multiple Voices of the Self

Introduction

The previous chapter gives an extensive theoretical argument for perspectives on the self which emphasise its relational, multiple, embodied and fictional nature in contrast to dominant perspectives on the self largely originating in the world-view of modernity which focus on the self's separateness, singularity, cognitive basis, and concreteness. This thesis will now go on to explore how I have tried to work with and realise these less dominant perspectives on the self in my practice.

One important area in which I go on to examine working with a more relational, multiple, embodied, fictional sense of the self is in my practice as an educator and in working with organisational change. This will be illustrated in chapters seven and eight.

A further area to explore this sense of the self is through the medium of the writing of the thesis. The previous chapter, as already noted, is written in one particular voice – what I have termed my ‘scholarly voice’. It is, though, only one possible voice, albeit a powerful and dominating one in academic discourse. I appreciate the sweep and intellectual rigour of this voice. Its value further lies in being able to argue for the existence and validity of other voices. A ‘polyphony’ of voices (Bahktin, 1984) can then be used to structure the thesis, in which the different voices, indicating different forms of awareness and expression, are given equal weight. Two of these additional voices will now be introduced. The first, in the remainder of this chapter is a ‘critical/cynical voice’, which has already made a brief entry in the dialogical postscript in chapter two. The second voice to be introduced will be a ‘personal autobiographical’ voice in chapter five.

These different voices whilst being aspects of the writer’s individual psyche simultaneously have a social and collective dimension. They find expression using different genres, which shape and give form to their particularity. The ‘critical/cynical voice’ can be located within the style and forms of expression of a certain kind of contemporary journalism and fiction writing. Likewise the ‘personal autobiographical voice’ can be located within the general area of autoethnography and confessional writing.

In this and the next chapter, I will mostly let each voice speak for itself, with some short commentaries in the following sections. Connections and linkages between the voices will be made in chapter six.

Section one: the ‘critical/cynical voice’

This voice has already been introduced in the imaginary dialogue at the end of chapter two. He will be given a full head of steam and the rights to an exclusive platform in the following book review. This was written in March 1999, (apart from the quote by Roy Keane, which was inserted later as it seemed so apt).

A review of ‘Synchronicity: the Inner Path of Leadership’ by Joseph Jaworski (1996)

The only thing that goes with the flow is a dead fish Roy Keane (2002)

*It's coming to America first,
The cradle of the best and of the worst.
It's here they got the range
and the machinery for change
and it's here they got the spiritual thirst.
It's here the family's broken
And it's here the lonely say
That the heart has got to open
In a fundamental way.
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.*

Leonard Cohen, from his album ‘The Future’ (1992)

I had heard of this book from a number of sources. I had previously taken it off a friend's bookshelf and flicked through it, but he had told me he did not rate it very highly so I did not pursue reading the book at that time. But I kept finding references to it, so eventually went up to the Learning Resource Centre at Roffey Park Management Institute to see if they had a copy. Surprise. Surprise. You go searching for a book entitled ‘Synchronicity’ and you find that two copies have just arrived that very day. Clearly the universe was trying to tell me something.

So I read the book, very avidly in fact. I read it on the train, I read it at home, I read it in cafes, I read it at work. I kept thinking that someone would come up to me and say 'Excuse me. I couldn't help but notice what you are reading. I'm the author of that book. Do you mind if we sit down and have a chat.' Or else, I imagined that, whilst immersed in the book, I would look up and gaze into the eyes of the most beautiful woman in the world, and without saying a word we would just know that we were predestined to meet, that we would be married within the year, have four beautiful and unusually gifted children (two boys and two girls), and she would give up her highly paid job as a fund manager working for George Soros and retrain as a missionary. Unfortunately none of this happened.

Overall, I found the book very moving and stimulating. In places it moved me to tears, at other times I was prompted to anger. I thought this is in many ways a wonderful and unusual book, it gives importance to all the things I care about but why, putting aside my own envy and jealousy, does it leave me feeling slightly queasy?

The book documents in a highly personal way the author's life-journey from being born the son of 'the Colonel', a Colossus indeed (very difficult to be born into such a wealthy family with such a brilliant and enormously respected father who would later become chief prosecutor for the Watergate trials), through to dazzling early career success in building a prestigious law practice, and then on through divorce, mid-life crisis, meetings with remarkable men and the odd woman (who he marries), to setting up the leadership institute that would save the world. And then onto working in a senior management position as head of worldwide scenario planning with Shell, that well known paragon of corporate virtue and foresight – this was after all written pre-Brent Spar and no amount of clever scenario planning and jetting all over the world to meet key people in tune with the zeitgeist is going to predict the warped actions of a few tree-hugging misfits from Greenpeace.

Along the way the author is blessed with conversation and acquaintance with some of the leading intellects of the age; David Bohm, Peter Senge, Francisco Varela, and anybody who is anybody in the leadership business - John Gardner, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Warren Bennis, Mayor Tom Bradley, and Uncle Tom Cobbley and all (except he's not American so possibly wouldn't make the list).

Actually, sarcasm aside, the book is at times very touching, and the questions the author is grappling with are extremely important and some are difficult to convey in words.

What does it mean to live differently? What does it mean not to live and act out of the traditional, mechanistic, instrumentalist, Western worldview which privileges doing and achieving far beyond being? What happens when we try to act more in accordance and in participation with emergent and unfolding processes and dynamics in groups and organisations? How can we create real dialogue within and between the institutions which govern our lives? How can we see the world more holistically when our thinking is so entrenched in creating separation and division?

So what is the problem? Why do I feel queasy?

Well, first, there is the problem of what I see as the huge unaware, cultural bias in the book. At times it reads as if it is American leadership that is going to save the world. On page 92, in an important early meeting with John W. Gardner, Joe says

"I finished by telling him that what I envisioned was larger in scope than discovering and developing leadership for our country. I told him that I thought the world was on the threshold of a golden era, and that what we did as citizens of this planet would determine whether we could make it, that we were truly at a turning point, and that American leaders could play a pivotal role in the human race making this transition."

It's onwards, upwards, ever-optimistic, towards the rosy new prosperous dawn of what later, when Joe gets to work on his preferred scenario, increasingly looks like unfettered deregulated free trade and market liberalisation.

Joe Jaworski, from his humble origins as an everyday WASP, has stumbled upon some very different ideas about the world and how human beings can act in the world, which Eastern cultures have been articulating over the last two millenia, though to be fair there is the passing nod to and occasional quote from Lao-Tzu. And in a breath-taking piece of marketing, these ideas are getting re-packaged as this radically new (predominantly American led) approach to leadership which the rest of the world can't help but follow.

Tellingly, one of the comments on the back cover from Dee Hock flogging the book says, ".....Synchronicity is the story of one man's journey toward the place we must all go in the century ahead" (my underlining). In this brave new world of emergence and possibility there is this prescribed place that we all have to go to. Please Mr Hock may I be excused. Clearly it is our inescapable destiny to follow this new version of the

American dream, to join Joe Jaworski and all the tin men on the yellow brick road to Utopia.

I can't help thinking that it's a shame and no coincidence that in all the wonderful people he came across in his global travels Joe did not have a meaningful encounter with an ardent, post-modern, gay Eastern European feminist who could have deconstructed his heroic quest for world leadership. But then she probably would not have been young, beautiful and heterosexual unlike the future Mrs Jaworski whom Joe does synchronistically encounter at O'Hare airport in Chapter 13.

And whilst on the theme of quest, Joe wheels in another Jo, a certain Joseph Campbell, to help out and provide mythological justification for his life purpose and leadership curriculum. Clearly, (and after repeated viewing of Star Wars), we are all engaged in the hero's quest, going through the three stages of hearing the call and departing, suffering the trials and ordeals, and finally returning and reintegrating to society. So let's take this description of the hero's journey, which normally will have its own unique rhythm and timing for each person, and build a programme around it. It's the new spiritual whistlestop tour of the world. If it's Tuesday it's not Paris but the supreme ordeal. OK folks, time to move onto reintegration, the programme's nearly at an end.

So this new packaging of the American dream might understandably be some cause for the queasiness, but what else?

Well, there is a major problem around assigning meaning to the events Joe encounters. Clearly, Joe thinks he is on a roll or 'in the flow' and participating in the unfolding of the universe and his pivotal role within the universal scheme of things. This is experientially validated, for him, by the sense of doors opening and what Joe calls 'predictable miracles'. The universe is cooperating with Joe to help him fulfil his destiny. But I'm not so sure it's so easy and unequivocal to assign a sense of larger meaning to one's life. In his book, 'The Spiritual Tourist', Mick Brown amusingly describes travelling in India on the ashram trail and having the continual conversation when meeting strangers about the meaning behind their meeting and how it is an expression of God's (or a more local guru's) purpose. It is very easy and also a potential route to full-blown paranoia as well as genius and mysticism to be constantly seeing the interconnectedness and wider purpose behind everything.

And there is an assumption that if we are fulfilling our destiny, participating in the universe's unfolding, that will be a benign process, heading towards greater democracy and, yes, surprise, surprise, towards those American Constitutional ideals of freedom and self determination. How marvellous when the universe itself starts to market the American dream. Microsoft and Coca-Cola get to sponsor God, and, better still, in a co-created universe, God is also sponsoring Microsoft and Coca-Cola.

In another important early meeting with Charles Kiefer and Peter Senge, Joe summarises Kiefer and Senge describing 'metanoic organisations' as

".....these organisations operate with a conviction that they can shape their destiny. The climate created within such an organisation can have profound effects upon people particularly by nurturing an understanding of and a responsibility for the larger social systems within which the individual and the organisation operate. In such an organisation, individuals aligned around a common vision can have extraordinary influence in the world." (p. 94)

Yes, I can buy that, but not the implicit assumption that this is then equated automatically and unproblematically with goodness and virtue and, as said earlier "basic beliefs in freedom and self-determination." (p. 94). Joe is very excited by all this talk of 'metanoic organisations' and tells Charlie and Pete;

".....their concepts were highly aligned with the fundamental themes of the Leadership Forum: that at the heart of effective societal leadership is a deep sense of purposefulness; that there is extraordinary power in a group committed to a common vision; that successful leadership depends upon a fundamental shift of being, including a deep commitment to the dream and a passion for serving versus being driven by the pursuit of status and power....." (p. 94).

Yes, great! This is all good stuff, as American as apple-pie and motherhood. But, a cheap point, what about Hitler? Now there was a man with vision and commitment, who saw himself as fulfilling a larger destiny, tied up with the destiny of his race. OK, so maybe he wasn't so hot on dialogue but he sure knew how to create alignment. Probably all manner of 'predictable miracles' occurred to him, many extraordinary coincidences, all those doors opening, which must have convinced him that he was indeed a man of destiny.

What is completely lacking in this account of leadership is any real recognition and analysis of power and power relations. It is a fundamentally asocial, ahistorical, critically unreflective account of leadership and organisations. There is only one place in the book where some of the real political problems and preoccupations of people in organisations surface. That is on page 128 where Joe says;

"This incompleteness in me also resulted in my attracting some key people around me on whom I ultimately couldn't rely – people whose deeper interest was not in the forum, but in their own agendas."

But note that Joe sees this as a personal problem, an 'incompleteness' in him, rather than a wider social and political problem. Or else the issue is framed (p. 129) as 'incoherence in the organisation', so that it is only a matter of getting everyone truly aligned again, ideally through deep dialogue. This ignores the political dimension of organisational life, which emphasises that individuals and groups will have different interests and agendas, and that all this talk of coherence and alignment serves as an ideology to mask and obfuscate real differences. Also, as writers like Pascale and Stacey have pointed out, conflict and lack of coherence can lead to unexpected creativity and innovation.

But Joe does not want to lose his sense of everyone being aligned with a universal purpose. Who knows, it might be bad for business. And this brings me onto my final reason for discomfort with the book.

Assuming that we may indeed be able to act in a different way which is more 'in flow' and participating in life's unfolding rather than trying to bend our lives to a predetermined plan, and, let's face it, this is not easy, it takes more than a few chance airport meetings or encounters with the natural world to do this – in many religions this is acquired through years of disciplined spiritual practice. So, assuming that we can do this, even if only for those short-lived wonderful moments of epiphany – if Joe had his way we'd be in flow the whole time - what then is our relationship to this wider sense of what is beyond us, beyond our egoistic concerns, beyond the human altogether? And what attitude does participation with the beyond generate in us?

And this is the source of my last discomfort. For Joe, it appears to be part and parcel of the experiences he has had that he expands into them, rather than vice versa. On page 57, reflecting on his mystical moment with the ermine up a mountainside, and other

watershed experiences, he says; "I continued to have similar experiences where my sense of identity expanded to include God and the entire universe."

Hey Joe. You don't think you might be getting a little grandiose here? You're expanding into God, rather than God and the universe penetrating and filling you. Having nurtured cultural imperialism elsewhere in the book, now we are getting into psychological imperialism - the western ego's on the rampage again. And this underlying grandiosity is a constant theme in the book. Joe's temptation is to see the universe operating through him, to be affirming him in his role of creating the leadership institute that will save the world.

And this theme reaches its ultimate expression in the final chapter of the book. Here Joe teams up again with Peter Senge and she-who-is-foredestined-to-become-his-editor-even-though-many-others-would-kill-for-the-honour, Betty Sue, to participate in a conference on learning organisations and communities at Mount Washington Hotel, Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. This venue, of course, is seriously endowed with significance (those 'predictable miracles' are having a ball). For Joe, Bretton Woods is a symbol of post-war partnership, an expression of generosity of spirit of the victors, the birth of a new world order ushered in by (p. 188) 'the currency stability that was badly needed for reconstruction.' He seems blissfully unaware of other readings of this historic event as the beginnings of an oppressive, dollar-dominated global economy.

Peter Senge, too, is determined to get in on the act of giving world-importance to his and his audience's work. He says,

"Just to say the obvious, that's why we're here. Something special is happening here, and it's happening at many places all over the world. When the world leaders came here in 1944, they came with a sense of purpose and did extremely important work. And important work is taking place in this room at this very moment." (p. 195).

Anyway, not content with the symbolism of the birthplace of the new post-war world order, Joe also wants to bring in the Nuremberg war trials, his father, and the question about what enabled many ordinary Germans to go along with the horrors of the holocaust. And this leads us to the final hubris when he says;

"...I discovered that this is the work I intend to do. It is also the work Peter is doing: to discover how to transform institutions as well as the individual human heart to ensure that this kind of pain doesn't continue to occur in the world again and again." (p. 194)

Do they really think they can do this? This is the ultimate human arrogance; to believe they can unlock the mystery of the human heart, to continue unquestioningly the whole enlightenment project, to bring light and order into the world. Where is the proper recognition and respect for the dark, for the shadow, for Dionysus as well as Apollo?

Section two: commentary

A friend, on reading the above, referred to the style of the review as my 'Loaded' voice (after the male magazine). This is a critical, ironic, clever, cutting, cynical, sneering voice very much to be found in certain kinds of contemporary journalism. This comment helped me see the collective as well as the idiosyncratic dimension of this voice. I am not just articulating a personal point of view and form of expression in this voice but also expressing a style and phenomenon of the times we live in – a pervasive sense of cynicism.

Bourdieu, the French sociologist, provides a profound and far-reaching perspective from which to understand the prevalence of cynicism. His short book 'Acts of Resistance' (1998) is a collection of talks in which he argues against the way that neo-liberalism, the current dominant economic orthodoxy, assumes an inevitable, naturally based order and is no longer seen as a set of social and political choices that can be challenged and opposed. In an argument echoing that of the first section of chapter three, he claims that neo-liberal economic discourse is a "programme of methodical destruction of collectives (neo-classical economics recognises only individuals, whether it is dealing with companies, trade unions or families)." Bourdieu claims that current economic thinking, by basing itself entirely on mathematical model of the rational individual, sets out to destroy the public, collective dimension of life and the social and political gains that societies have made in the last hundred years or so. In this context, he says, occurs "the imposition, everywhere, at the highest levels of the economy and the state, or in corporations, of that kind of moral Darwinism, which, with the cult of the 'winner' establishes the struggle of all against all and *cynicism* as the norm of all practices." (His emphasis).

I find Bourdieu's comment on cynicism here very illuminating. It helps shift what I generally experience as a uniquely personal voice, more habitually directing its venom into self-criticism, into understanding this as a form of internalised social expression, which has arisen in the particular context of a dominant view of market economics that also impacts many other realms of life

Section three: the 'personal autobiographical voice'

Section six of chapter one describes how a 'personal autobiographical voice' became a significant voice in the writing of this thesis. In the same way that my 'critical/cynical' voice can be understood as a form of both self and social expression, 'my personal autobiographical voice', as well telling the unique story of phases of my life history, draws on the established literary genre of personal autobiography, and, as an example of a social scientific research method, can be situated within the field of autoethnography.

In the first six months of 2001, I wrote two autobiographical accounts to help clarify what had shaped and influenced my self, my values and my practice. These two accounts are contained in section one and section three of the next chapter. Sections two and four of chapter five offer some commentary on the responses generated by showing these autobiographical accounts to others.

Chapter Five

Autoethnography

7

“Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth ethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focussing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations.

Ellis & Bochner (2000)

Section one: my first twenty one years

*If we are ignorant of our past,
we will be obliged to declare that
everything durable in our society was
constructed by ghosts and consequently
we ourselves are nothing more than the
souls of the departed.
Without the culture of tradition, we would
not have the tradition of culture.
We would be orphans of imagination*

Carlos Fuentes

I was born in Farnborough, Kent in January 1954. At the time my father was away in Andover completing his national service in the RAF and my mother was living in Chislehurst. 1954 was also the year, according to Naomi Klein in her book ‘No Logo’ (2000), that Marlboro man was launched - “the longest running ad campaign in history.” In common with many young men I would grow up to be influenced by the image of ruggedness, self-sufficiency, and isolation the brand offered as a role model of masculinity. Indeed, when I started to smoke in my adolescence, I rapidly graduated

from the coarseness of Players No. 6 through to the gold embossed refinement of Benson & Hedges and onto the cool of Marlboro.

My birth was long and difficult. When I finally emerged into the world I had to be put into an incubator for a number of days. The effort and pain of my birth so appalled my mother that she decided she did not want to go through it again until my father persuaded her to have another child some nine years later when my sister was born. I have no recollection of my mothers' pregnancy then - no memories of her growing larger, no memories of talking about a new member in the family. My sole memory of this time is my father answering the phone at home, after my mother had given birth at hospital, and being given news of the new arrival and telling me my mother had had a baby girl. My sister was called Dilwen, an unusual Welsh name, named after a friend at school my mother had known and liked.

I have very little sense of continuous memory of the first ten or so years of my childhood. Perhaps nobody does. There seems to be a blanket of fog immersed over that time. There are of course snippets, fragments of memory. For example, my first day at school, the thrill of holding hands with Susan, my new friend from the Council estate at the bottom of the hill, as we were lined up in pairs to go into the canteen; the strange new smells of school dinners, wax crayons and sandpits. I recall the smell and texture of the old blanket, that I used to wrap around my feet to help me sleep, which I called 'cosy' and which later I understood from reading Winnicott (1971) as the major 'transitional object' in my childhood. I can remember the times I would explore the corners of our small back garden to look for snails and other insects to put in the vivarium I had acquired. Occasionally now a small detail in my current life will grasp me - the particular shade of a toy, the soft glow of a fairy light display at Xmas - and re-evoke a feeling from my childhood, not a concrete memory attached to a specific incident but a lived connection from the present back to the past, bodily felt as an opening in my chest, a sense of depth and continuity for which I am grateful.

I do not imagine this sense of fragmented memory is unusual. It went along too, in my case, with no strong sense of family history across the generations, little sense of rootedness, of wider cultural location. My mother was an only child and had lost her mother in 1940 when she was a young girl. Her father eventually came to live with us for a few years until his death in 1961 but he remains a shadowy figure, kindly but indistinct. My father by contrast conveyed a much stronger sense of family history. His family were from the West Country and for a number of generations had lived in and

around Plympton St Maurice. His father was a plumber and a number of his relatives were local dignitaries – I would be taken to visit his aunts and uncles and be shown the splendid mayoral chain his uncle's position merited. We would over a number of years visit his family in Devon for the summer holidays, motoring down in our new car (a temperamental Ford Popular before we acquired the more reliable Ford Escort) and spending hours stuck in traffic on the Honiton by-pass. His parents lived in a smallish terraced house, a short walk away from the main shopping street in Plympton. His mother cooked the most wonderful Cornish pasties, with a thick ridged pastry crust and the perfect combination of peppery minced beef, potato, turnip and carrot that I have never been able to find again.

For most of my childhood we lived in a typical three bedroomed semi-detached house in a newly built suburban estate in Upminster, Essex, on the outskirts of London. This estate had been built on what I assume now was farmland. Towards the end of my teenage years the North Eastern corner of the M25 was being constructed to encircle the whole of Upminster within the London orbital ring. Today standing in the local park, bordering on woodland, where I played endless games of 'runouts' with my schoolfriends, you can hear the constant low roar of the traffic. Most of the roads on the estate were named after British rivers. We lived in number two, Forth Road. Our house bordered onto the local school's playing fields. Emerging from the greyness and bleakness of post war austerity, the estate was helping cultivate the rising middle class that my parents were aspiring to. It was situated between the Council blocks of flats at the bottom of the hill and the larger detached houses at the top of the hill, one of which, in 1967, we moved to.

The infant and junior schools I attended were two streets away, a short walk up Forth Road, and down Severn Drive. I could walk there with the other children from the same side of my street without having to cross a road. Very recently, visiting the neighbourhood of streets around my old house, the area became re-animated with memory. The fog cleared to reveal a landscape criss-crossed with incident and desire. This landscape was no longer the revelation of suburban mediocrity and dullness I have tended to stereotype it as. Each house, intersection of streets and recreational area, evoked the recall of events and people such as; a fight between my and a neighbour's dog; my country dancing partner who lived at number ten Forth Road and who was the source of my first crush; my lengthy but eventually successful attempt to climb every one of eight trees in the local park; the shocking occasion when a man exposed himself to my best friend's sister and forced her to masturbate him.

I don't remember either being especially happy or unhappy as a child. I was certainly upset and horrified by the incident involving my friend's sister and my mind became filled with wild and unpleasant imaginings of the horrors that lurked in the woods. I led what seemed to be a relatively normal life amongst the other normal families in that area. I'm sure David Lynch, amongst others, would see such 'normality' differently. No doubt, in the English equivalent of Twin Peaks, underneath this veneer of suburban respectability and aspiration to affluence, the human psyche continued to manifest its manifold, less conventional, possibilities – they were though, mostly, well hidden from view. My father worked hard, achieving steady promotions from engineer to overall plant manager at the Proctor and Gamble factory he worked at in Grays Thurrock and played golf at weekends. My mother stayed at home and cooked and cleaned and had coffee with her friends. Everybody around us seemed the epitome of a normal family apart from a girl down the road in my latter years at junior school achieving the stigma of becoming a child from a 'broken home'. After thirty-five years, this 'girl' recently re-contacted me through Friends Reunited; she is now living near New York, working as a conference organiser. Her own marriage has just ended, and she is mourning the loss of many people she knew who were killed in the World Trade Buildings on September 11th.

I did well at school and was earmarked to take the scholarship exams for the nearest Direct Grant School. In my last year at Junior school, together with the son of my parents' closest friends, (who was by then my best friend), I received extra tuition from the headmaster of our junior school. We would go together to see him at his house about a mile away towards the centre of Upminster. The timing of our visits there meant that we missed 'Top of the Pops' which was rapidly becoming the important TV event of the week and therefore these additional lessons were tinged with resentment at both the demands of the extra work and also missing our favourite programme - video recorders were still about a decade away.

As well as a few pupils taking the scholarship exam, the whole of the eldest class at junior school also took the eleven plus. Part of the preparation for this era of exams was Mr Troughton, our teacher, devising quizzes in which the entire class would stand at the front of the classroom and be asked quick-fire questions which would eliminate the people who were slowest to answer. The deselected pupils would return to their desks. There would be a number of rounds of this game, the numbers of pupils growing smaller each time culminating in a final between two people. Doing well at this, which I usually did, resulted in gold stars being given to the house one was placed in. I was in Pentyre house.

My friend and I duly took the scholarship exam to Sir Anthony Browne's school in Brentwood. To my chagrin he obtained a scholarship and I did not but I did well enough in this exam and my eleven plus to warrant being given a place at Brentwood which was funded by the local council. I also recall being helped in my eleven plus by my headmaster – the selfsame man who had provided the extra tuition – surreptitiously giving me the answers to the only question I could not do on the maths paper. Looking back, this was the moment I can trace my disillusionment with academic objectivity to - an early example of Habermas' (1972) point that one cannot detach knowledge from human interests.

I duly attended Sir Anthony Browne's school at Brentwood. This, in contrast to the informality and innocent friendliness of my previous schools, was a major 'culture shock' and I was unhappy for most of my six years and one term there. The school was for boys only and, although taking a mixture of fee paying and council funded places and also boarding and day-boy pupils, was modelled on a traditional English public school. In fact my school seemed to have absorbed all the petty tyranny and deep rooted cruelty of the English public school system with none of its richness and eccentricity of tradition. We were required to refer to our classmates by our surnames, so my best friend was no longer 'Matthew' but 'Scales'. I remember my first Latin lesson in which the Latin master demonstrated the declension of the verb 'amare' (to love) by beating out its various tenses on the back of one of my class mates until the boy was reduced to tears (and then had to suffer the ignominy of further taunting from his fellow pupils as a 'cry-baby'). Likewise I remember gym lessons in which the gym teacher, living up to the caricature of sadistic gym teachers at public schools, would entertain himself by getting the whole class to hang by the arms from wall bars in a crucifixion-like pose. The first two who dropped to the ground would be caned. Similarly, at the beginning of the lesson, the last person to get changed from their ordinary school clothes and into the gym would be caned. When I saw Lindsay Anderson's film 'If' in the late sixties it was immediately recognisable - it could have been set at my school.

To attend the school I was required to travel on the school bus, a journey of about five miles. These journeys where the children often ran riot, ignoring the attempts of an elderly retainer to keep order, were full of teasing and tormenting. It was important not to be different, not to attract attention, to have a mannerism which could be picked on, or to be a 'jewboy' or a 'queer' or a 'swot'. Any weakness was seized on by the boys, including myself, grateful for the opportunity to be the perpetrator rather than the victim of abuse. The school was run on strictly hierarchical lines with the masters overall

in charge, then the prefects, then the older boys lording it over the younger boys and so on down the line. The worst place to be was therefore in the youngest year, the second form, and the only escape seemed through endurance and gradually over time progressing through the system, becoming a third former then a fourth former then a fifth former and so on. And then in the sixth form, as if by some secret and inexplicable mandate to behave more humanely, we stopped referring to one another by our surnames and began using first names.

The abuses of such schools and their role in creating an emotionally damaged patriarchal elite have been well documented, including more recent revelations of widespread sexual abuse, as well as parodied in films such as 'If. Thankfully, too, much has been done to change the worst excesses of this form of education. What was described as 'character building' is now seen for what it is – straightforward cruelty. I am still awed and appalled at the remarkable capacity of such systems to recreate themselves. In common with all abuse, the abused, in this case the younger and weaker boys, over time grow up to be the abusers and perpetuate the tradition. Any public attempt within the system to show kindness, by the younger and/or newer teachers or the pupils themselves, is seized on as a sign of weakness or being a 'queer'. And I still find echoes of this dynamic, albeit in much more sophisticated forms, at the senior levels of some of the organisations I have worked with, especially those who have drawn their membership from the English public school system

I survived at this school, propped and pumped up my self-esteem by being good at exams. Every month every individual in each class was tested and graded and the results publicly displayed. I did well in these internal league tables and then in my GCSE O-levels. As I had no clear view myself which subjects I wanted to pursue at A-level, my father arranged for me to see a careers advice service in London. Here I was (further) tested and, despite showing no aptitude for anything practically scientific, was recommended to take physics, chemistry and maths, which I duly did.

Then, in 1969, I entered the sixth form and found myself being called 'Paul' rather than 'Roberts' by my fellow sixth formers. Also, as the different yearnings of adolescence made themselves felt, I began to consider that there might be more to life than the endless passing of exams and the regular ennui of watching "Saturday night with the Stars" followed by 'Match of the Day" on Saturday evenings. At the same time the after-glow of the sixties was making significant inroads into my school. Many of the Upper sixth form grew their hair long and developed a lively alternative music and drugs

subculture within the school. I decided that I wanted to branch out – partly to meet girls who were becoming an increasingly unreachable mystery at my single sex school. I plucked up courage and asked a boy outside my school who I vaguely knew, if I could attend a local youth club with him. To my surprise he readily agreed. It turned out that he no longer attended the youth club I thought that he did, which some of my older school fellows also attended and which had a reputation for sixties influenced ‘sex–drugs-and-rock-and-roll’. He was instead now a regular visitor at the Upminster Methodist youth club. So I donned what I hoped was a suitable outfit and went with trepidation into this brand new world of mixed gender teenagers. Unexpectedly, and happily, I found a number of people at the Methodist youth club from my old junior school with whom I had lost contact in the intervening years. I quickly found a ready home within this group, not realising that all of us at that time were looking for such a home, and was soon spending increasing time outside school establishing myself in this peer group. Soon I was going to parties with my new found and re-found friends and as time went on we even evolved a name for ourselves – the ‘Upminster Fun Gang’. One of my friends had a talent for mimicry and nicknames and I found myself surrounded by friends with epithets like ‘meat,’ ‘goon’, ‘lean’, and ‘haggis’.

At our height I imagine this group was a fairly formidable presence. We, like every gang of teenagers, certainly thought we were. Anywhere between ten and twenty of us would meet at Upminster station after school – we attended a variety of schools and the station provided a common and convenient meeting point. We spent hours hanging around the station, street corners (in the summer), and drinking endless cups of instant coffee in those houses, including mine, whose parents would give us admittance. Whenever I now listen to Bruce Springsteen’s song, ‘My Hometown’, I am impressed with his capacity to capture in the music and lyrics this deeply felt sense and memory of the place we grow up in.

In 1969, I discovered rock music, bought my first LP (Disraeli Gears by the Cream), learnt which music was cool and rapidly graduated from the Beatles through to Bob Dylan and The Incredible String Band, then matured into the west coast psychedelic acid-rock of Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead, culminating in the zany surrealism of Captain Beefheart. I learnt to smoke and experimented with the whole range of cigarettes from Woodbines to Sobranie Cocktails. At the same time opportunities for further experimentation were becoming available. A newish member had joined our group, nicknamed ‘puscle’ (God knows why), who was an accomplished guitarist and had interesting contacts into the more illicit aspects of the rapidly evolving youth scene.

'Pustle' established himself as the local pusher of choice and soon we were all scoring our 'quid' deals off him and learning the arcane rituals of joint making. It took a few occasions for anything to happen for me with cannabis and it was and remained always a mixed experience with the benefits of heightened sensory awareness but the drawbacks of inducing an underlying anxiety and mild paranoia that I imagine was always potential in me.

There was also an innocence and prankster quality about our group. Led by one of our more audacious members, we would raid the local golf course, collect all the flags, and use them to write messages on the fairway. We would fill in mail order forms for our local cannabis supplier and get them sent to his home address under the name of Mr. P. Usher. We would ring up random names in the phonebook and play them brief spoken snatches from Captain Beefheart's 'Troutmask Replica' album such as " A fish eating dough in a polyethylene bag is fast'n'bulbous. Got me."

The end of the sixties drug-influenced zeitgeist began to exert a stronger pull on me. I read 'The Doors of Perception', Aldous Huxley's (1970) book on his experiences with mescaline, discovered Timothy Leary's exhortation to "tune in , turn on and drop out", and borrowed 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' from Upminster library. Some of my circle had already tried or were considering trying LSD and I decided to join them. My first trip was not especially notable apart from one point. Whilst crossing the large recreation ground with two friends, I bumped into a group of 'skinheads' (who were not well disposed to the 'hippy' movement and its local representatives). The situation threatened to turn nasty until one of the skinheads, a boy who had a reputation for being particularly 'hard', recognised me from our days at junior school together and for some unfathomable reason decided to leave us alone.

At school I was becoming less interested in my science A-levels, ostentatiously carrying around the latest LP's I was listening to – the more obscure the better - and attempting to grow my hair long. This meant trying to stay out of the way of the headmaster who was trying to rigorously enforce the school policy on hair not growing over ears or over collars. The school, in an attempt to bring itself into the twentieth century, and enable its pupils to mix with the opposite sex, started having discotheques. At one of these, a girl from one of the two sister schools based in Brentwood threw herself from the upper storey of one the main school buildings whilst under the influence of LSD and was seriously injured.

This, predictably, initiated a wide-scale inquiry and sweep-net into the extent of drug involvement within the school, which quickly led to a number of expulsions. The police became involved and one evening, whilst I was at home waiting for the start of Monty Python's Flying Circus, there was a phone call for my father. From this, he told me gravely that the police wanted to interview me in connection with allegations that I had been involved with other pupils in smoking cannabis. He insisted that I tell him the extent of my involvement with drugs and the people who also took drugs with me. I told him everything.

A week or so later I went with my father to be interviewed by two Brentwood based policemen. It transpired they had interviewed another boy who had said, accurately, that I had smoked cannabis with him at the Shepton Mallett pop festival. This was the only direct evidence they had and I strenuously denied this allegation. The police skilfully worked their good guy/bad guy routine on me and I was getting close to confessing everything when one of them, (the good cop), said; "We realise your headmaster is a very ruthless man'. At this point I realised that if I admitted to smoking cannabis I would be summarily expelled from the school and so resolved to continue denying the charges.

Sometime later my father was rung by the police and told that they would not be pressing charges. I also subsequently learnt (I forget from where) that the reason I was not expelled from school was that it was thought I had a strong chance of attending Oxford or Cambridge. As the number of pupils reaching Oxbridge was a key performance indicator for Direct Grant Schools, it was therefore in the best interests of the school for me to remain. I occasionally wonder what course my life would have taken if I had bowed to the interrogatory pressure of the police, confessed and been expelled.

At the time I found and still find this a shameful incident. I could see that it effected my father deeply and he was concerned that I had ruined or nearly ruined a promising future. He made me agree to not continue to be involved in any way with the drug scene and to stop seeing the friends I had who were involved. I reluctantly agreed to this. At the same time my identity was very wrapped up in the group of friends I had, and what I can only think of as the spirit of the sixties. I secretly continued to be involved with the friend I had told my father I would not see and continued to smoke cannabis. In the summer of 1971 I was offered a lift to the Isle of Wight Pop festival at which Jimi Hendrix was the star attraction. My parents would not allow me to attend this so I bundled up the clothes I needed for the event, threw them out of an upstairs

window, climbed out of the window and ran away to the Isle of Wight. I did at least have the decency on arrival at the Isle of Wight to ring my parents and tell them where I was.

Despite all these distractions from my studies, and my disenchantment with school life, I continued to work hard, revise thoroughly for my A-level exams, and obtained very high grades. This meant that at the end of the sixth form I stayed on for another term to take the Oxbridge exams. I was now in the seventh form, the school elite, one of a group of about twenty boys. Of these twenty, only two of us, myself and another boy also distantly implicated in the school drug scandal, did not hold positions of responsibility as prefects. I have often thought about the ambiguity of the position I had here and the way it has continued to be a theme in my life – both part of the privileged white Oxbridge male elite yet also outside, critical, simultaneously drawn to and despising of it. Years later at a psychotherapy training workshop, someone described me as a ‘maverick’, a word I liked and took to heart as it positively connotated what I still generally wondered could be outdated adolescent rebellion.

I continued on the path that others, primarily my father, had mapped out for me – when I was younger and more impressionable he had taken me on visits to Cambridge. I duly passed the entrance exams for Oxbridge and was accepted at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, to read Natural Sciences commencing in September 1972. This meant that I had most of what is now referred to as a ‘gap year’ to occupy myself with.

For the first part of this year I worked in a laboratory at a pharmaceutical company in Dagenham, a few tube stops westwards of Upminster along the District line. Whilst doing this, I met up one evening at a party with a former friend at Brentwood who was spending his ‘gap’ year living in Manchester before going on to read Classics at Oxford. He was doing community work and working on a radical non-violent Christian magazine. This obviously had a huge impact on me as I decided to go and stay with him in Manchester. I do not recall letting him know I would do this. I just hitch hiked to Manchester one day and turned up at the address he had given me which was the house from which the magazine, ‘The Catonsville Road Runner’, was produced. I think he must have been surprised by my unannounced and unexpected arrival but this could not have been so unusual in that milieu. I was welcomed, found a spot for my sleeping bag in the living room, and became part of the collective producing the magazine. I also joined my friend in voluntary work at the various community projects he was engaged in; serving meals to old people in the Hyde area, working with gypsy children as part of Manchester

University's community action group, and helping run an adventure playground in the now notorious Moss Side area.

From the spring through to the summer of 1972, I stayed in Manchester, at first continuing to sleep on the living room floor in my friend's house, and then moving to a rented room in a nearby house with my girlfriend from Upminster. She had joined me that summer to work in another adventure playground near Old Trafford. During this time I was exposed to radical political thinking and practice. The poverty and rawness of life I encountered in Salford and Manchester were a long way from the comfort and blandness of suburban London. It had a romance to it, an energy, edge and excitement that was absent in my home life.

I entered Cambridge University full of the experiences, ideals and ideas I had encountered in Manchester. I stumbled across the plethora of Marxist, socialist and anarchist student groups I met selling their wares at the 'Fresher' fairs. I was drawn to the political ideology of these groups but simultaneously put off by the forms of organisation they embodied which seemed as despotic and rigid as the structures they were committed to change. Later, I saw the parallels between these radical secular groups and the millennial or religious cults who provided such good field work opportunities for post-graduate sociology students – a point further brought home to me by the experience of a friend who joined one of the more extreme Marxist groups. This group became convinced there would be a military coup in England. My friend subsequently fled England warning of this imminent seizure of power and then returned somewhat shamefacedly when the coup did not materialise.

I soon became disinterested with the science degree I had started out on and changed course at the end of my first year to Social and Political Sciences. This provided a more amenable home for me both in the companionship of the kindred spirits who were also studying for this degree and also in the opportunity to legitimately engage with the wealth of ideas in psychology, sociology and political philosophy that constituted the syllabus.

As well as pursuing my academic studies and interests in radical political action I continued my experimentation with drugs. Coexisting with the more official world of the University and its traditions of academia, the debates of the Union, sport, and alcohol inspired japes was a strong and heady mix of sixties inspired radicalism and alternative subculture. These different alternative worlds reinforced and overlapped one

another. Many members of the socialist society had long hair and smoked the odd joint or two.

I became particularly friendly with two fellow students at my college. As in my earlier adolescence I had a need to find a peer group to establish myself and find an identity in a suitable milieu. The three of us had the same badge of long hair and regularly smoked cannabis together. In the second year we decided to take LSD together.

My experience of the 'trip' this time was very very different than the previous occasion. I think we were sold a particularly pure and powerful brand of the drug, which was easily available in Cambridge at that time. We took the drug in our rooms and then moved out into the college grounds. It was a warm sunny day. I started to experience psychedelic hallucinations as the trees, grass and buildings shape-shifted. Although I had read extensively about the effects of LSD, and knew in theory about its capacity for ego dissolution, I was not prepared psychologically for its full impact. I had assumed it would be like donning psychedelic glasses and their equivalent for each sense through which the world would appear, sound, smell and taste differently but that I would remain psychologically and ontologically unaltered. I thought it would be like a kind of Disney theme park for the mind.

Very quickly the hallucinations became unmanageable. I experienced multiple layers of hallucinations, dreams within dreams within dreams and so on, that I later saw cleverly portrayed in Bunuel's film, 'the Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie'. I had not appreciated the power of LSD to undermine the normal, consensually validated sense of reality we take for granted and which we generally depend on for anchoring and security. LSD suggests the unnerving possibility that everything we think is real could be a hallucination – if this is so, then how do we know the world we think we arrive back to after or during the 'trip' is not just another illusion? As the hallucinations took full grip it became more difficult to remember that where I was and that what was happening to me was due to the effects of the LSD. In other words, hallucinations and reality merged. At one point, whilst trying to pull myself back into the room I was in, rather than being lost along the successive trackways of the hallucinations I was engulfed by, I succeeded with extreme mental effort in getting back into the room. I then realised in horror that I was looking at myself through the eyes of one of my friends. I genuinely believed I had re-entered his body instead of mine.

There was building work going on in the college at this time. I became convinced that I had died, killed by the scaffolding collapsing on me. I had the full Timothy Learyesque experience of seeing my life flash before me, saw my parents at my funeral, distraught that I had died in such a manner. I felt my life essence detach itself from the earthly relationships I had formed and prepared myself to move onto the next level of existence. At the same time as I experienced the intense relief and beauty of this release, I also saw the full array of subsequent stages of existence laid out like Jacob's ladder in front of me and understood the insignificance of the one step I had taken. I felt my life essence dissolve into a river flowing around a figure I later recognised from Hindu mythology. I experienced being brought before God to account for my life and await his judgement of whether I was going to heaven or hell. In 'reality' at that time I was being taken from one college room to another. When the doors of the room I was being taken to were opened and I saw and felt the warmth of the lit gas-fire within I became convinced that I was being led to hell and ran off.

Gradually the full force of the 'hallucinations' subsided. I felt the relief of returning to a world that was apparently familiar, though at one point in my return I thought I was in a different world, which was identical to the world I had began in apart from being an exact mirror image. Everything was reversed. After I recovered from the awfulness of this realisation I remembered thinking that if this were the case then I would just have to live in this new world and better get on with it.

One of the (many) problems with LSD is that it is difficult to assimilate such an experience as I sketch out above within one's normal frame of reference and to know what kind of existential status and validity to ascribe to it. Mainstream western culture has successfully marginalised and denigrated such experiences, labelling them as psychotic episodes or the consequence of a drug induced illusion. A number of years later, reading in a journal an account by the Reichian bodywork psychotherapist David Boadella of his attempts to help his son recover from the nightmare of a bad 'trip', I was struck by his description of the LSD experience as being like 'gate-crashing heaven'. And of course it could equally well be hell that is gatecrashed. He makes the further point that in many traditions these experiences would be gradually and extensively prepared for. Others would act as guides qualified to help explore these realms. Their spiritual significance would be understood and able to be absorbed within the culture as part of a valid rite of passage. Typically in the west we are looking for chemically available instant, ideally painless, enlightenment. One pill, thanks to the Swiss chemist Albert Hofman's accidental discovery in 1938, and the CIA's subsequent interest in the potential of the

new discovery as a truth serum to aid interrogation or as a means of disabling an enemy's civilian population by poisoning their water supply – as described in Martin Lee and Bruce Schlain's well researched book 'Acid Dreams' (1986) - and all those years of discipline, necessary blind alleys and hard graft can be by-passed. The problem of course is that the discipline like any spiritual practice has a purpose in its own right and is simply not just a means to an end which can be substituted for by contemporary pharmacology.

It is impossible to know how this LSD experience has effected me in the long term. Certainly it opened my mind to the precariousness and lack of solidity of our normal sense of reality. It indicated there are huge areas of normally invisible experience that are occasionally glimpsed in daily life and made more accessible through the altered state of consciousness offered by the drug. It confirmed Hamlet's admonition that;

'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy'

It provided a multi- faceted and bewildering experience of another realm which I have come to think of, for want of a better word, as 'spiritual'. I appreciated existentially what I was beginning to understand intellectually through reading Berger and Luckman's (1966) 'The Social Construction of Reality' and attending Anthony Giddens' lectures about the socially determined nature of identity and the competing knowledge grounds for social theory. It provided a shattering, mysterious experience I have continually tried to understand and orient myself too.

So apart from radical politics and LSD how else did Cambridge effect me? At the time I was mostly oblivious to the splendour and sublime beauty of the place, seeing instead economic privilege and the bastion of the ruling class. Returning there in Easter 1984 to attend a conference at St John's College, I walked along the banks of the river Cam early one bright spring morning. The buildings and their grounds were so exquisitely beautiful, it almost took my breath away. But for the three years I was there I barely noticed such beauty. I graduated with a 2(1) degree, slightly disappointed that I had not got the First one of my tutors thought I was capable of. At the time too I was not enthralled with the quality of the educational experience I had received – at what was meant to be the pinnacle of academic excellence – but was not yet able to articulate the nature of my dissatisfaction.

I considered staying in the academic world to do research and a PhD, which I now find myself doing twenty five years later, but my political ideology at the time was insisting that I did some so called 'real work'. I joined some of the group of friends I had been living with in my final year at Cambridge and came down to London to find a suitable property to squat in.

Section two: working with 'my first twenty one years'

The bulk of the above autobiographical writing was done during a holiday in Lanzarote with my parents and sons in January 2001 and completed in February of the same year. The account remains almost entirely as I first wrote it, apart from now dating a number of references and making some minor grammatical changes.

Reacquainting myself with it, after a gap of two years, I'm pleasantly surprised by the quality of the writing. I think it meets the criteria to be outlined later in the thesis in chapter nine of being a 'good read', being engaging - at least it re-engaged my interest again - and situating my early autobiography in a wider social and political context. It has a relatively traditional chronological format but I like the way that pointers to a future self are occasionally layered into the writing. It was written primarily as an experiment in autoethnography (Okely & Callaway, 1992), to indicate the influences that have shaped my life, with a focus on as, Denzin (1997) describes, "those events, narratives and stories people tell one another as they attempt to make sense of the epiphanies or existential turning-points in their lives." (p. xvii)

After I had written this in February 2001, I somewhat nervously showed the text to my father, and also said that I proposed to include it on the web-site that was being designed for my PhD. I wanted him and my mother to read it first, and consider their response, before placing it in the public domain. Despite the trials and tribulations I thought I had inflicted on my parents, and the youthful rebellion of my teenage years, in later life, and especially following the birth of my two sons, I had developed a good trusting relationship with my parents. We had, though, never really discussed the incidents in my teenage years relating to my drug taking and interview by the police, and I had not spoken to my father about my experiences with LSD. These areas still felt raw, painful and potentially taboo. In response to reading the text, my father sent me the following email on 5th March 2001.

Paul,

As promised, I will make some comments on the contents of your draft autobiographical introduction, and try to articulate some concerns.

1. Do not underestimate people's strong reaction to the written word. It assumes an importance far greater than speech - it is "bread and butter" to the legal profession! - and there is no opportunity to soften or amplify your message.
2. A large part of the introduction deals with your experimentation with drugs as a meaningful influence in your formative years, and very little with sex and your relationships with girl friends. I was a bit surprised by this.
3. Because the drug culture is still regarded with suspicion, fear, and criminal in nature by society, and particularly the Establishment, your writing will provoke strong reaction, given the proposed public exposure over the internet. This will effect you, the boys and your business contacts, i.e. your family and career. I hope I am not being fanciful when I suggest that comments such as "Do I want my organization to be influenced by a person who has experimented with drugs", or "Does your father encourage you to try drugs?" could arise.
4. I think you should omit names and references which could identify specific individuals - I believe you have already decided to do this.
5. Do you propose the same degree of detail and frankness relating to your later life? You will need to evaluate the effects of public scrutiny on your family, ex wives, friends and business colleagues.

Reading this, I feel it all sounds negative. It comes from my concern with the possible effects on your relationship with the boys, and your career. Ultimately you have to decide what risks you are prepared to take from exposure of your previous experiences and thinking. The account was absorbing and very well written. Persevere, I know you will get there in the end.

Love Dad

As I had come, over time, to place great faith in my father's judgement, I decided to amend the account, take into account the inaccuracies identified by my parents, take out references that identified other people, and de-emphasise but still include the

experimentation with drugs. As well as receiving this email in response, sending my father this account also led to us broaching in conversation the difficult areas of my past.

As I was now even more aware of the potentially controversial nature of some of this material, I asked the chief executive at Roffey Park (who was previously Director of Research at Ashridge) for her opinion of this autobiographical writing. She was already familiar with the themes and methods of my research inquiries as I had shown and discussed with her the MPhil transfer document submitted in January 2000.

Furthermore, given a recent experience at that time, (referred to in chapter one), where a breach of confidentiality occasioned by showing an account of my work with one organisation to my supervisor and professional colleague had led to my expulsion from XYZ organisation that I had been working with and, which was at that time a major client of Roffey Park, I was particularly concerned not to take actions which might damage the reputation of Roffey Park.

As on the previous occasion of showing her my work, I was warmed by the perceptiveness, generosity and affirming nature of her response. In an email of 1st April 2001, she wrote:

Paul

You have probably realised that my delay in responding fully to your message means that I have been struggling a bit so I hope you won't mind if this note takes you through my thinking.

First, I loved reading what you have done already. You have a wonderfully direct and honest style that is engaging I think because of the way it triggers memories for the reader of things shared or not shared. For example,

Then I worried about your honesty - and the fact that I was eavesdropping not just on your experiences but also on those of others. Of course, I don't know whether the identities of others are disguised or, indeed, whether they are willing for their experiences to be broadcast. This is the dilemma of all writers and individuals are driven in different ways. On the other hand we depend on diaries and similar narratives for a real understanding of social history.....

These thoughts lie at the back of my mind as I think about you continuing your story on the web. I don't think there is anything written thus far that compromises

Roffey in any way but I guess (and I am guessing) that as your story develops your life and Roffey becomes more intermingled. This could become very difficult, especially if, as in the recent situation, it involved clients, colleagues or work processes and standards within Roffey more widely. (We talked briefly at this point when you gave me the new paper on 'showing my writing to others'.)

On the other hand - we must be on the third one by now - Roffey is a strong place where difficult and sensitive matters are confronted so we should be able to face up to this and for some individuals it might be positive and helpful. I think this is the nub. Individuals will be interested and find meaning in what you say.....

Val

I have reproduced sections of her reply as I think it helps to validate my inquiries vis-a-vis the criteria put forward at the end of chapter nine, especially the line where she says; "Individuals will be interested and find meaning in what you say."

As a result of her response, I decided to publish an amended version of the account on my web-site, which was only recently up and running. The account in this thesis is the original not the amended account. I decided to make this original account publicly available in the thesis after reading, in January 2002, Christopher Bache's (2000) extraordinary book 'Dark Night, Early Dawn' and following my subsequent correspondence with him.

Christopher Bache's book is a scholarly, rigorous, experientially based account of his sustained experimentation and description of over thirty in-depth sessions of non-ordinary states of consciousness. He writes within an established tradition of experiential inquiry into different states of consciousness and with a background steeped in religious study and thought. His writing gave me the courage to take my LSD experience more seriously, to stand up for it, and, by locating it within the field of transpersonal psychology, helped me think more productively and creatively about my own experience. The ideas in his book connected powerfully, too, with ideas of the self I had been writing about two months earlier (now in chapter three).

Reading 'Dark, Night, Early Dawn' astonished me. It demonstrated that it was possible to write in both a personal and a philosophical way about different states of consciousness. I found many echoes in the book with my own experiences and had a number of questions and points I wanted to raise with the author. As a result, I sent him

the following mail, dated 11th January 2002. I include most of the email as it represents the articulation of important aspects of my thinking as I attempt to link the ideas in Christopher Bache's book both with my own experience and with my own thinking about complexity. It shows, too, the development of my thinking in a live, dialogical, conversational way in interaction with another's writing rather than the more abstract propositional style evidenced in other parts of this thesis. This, importantly, illustrates further the practice at the heart of this thesis of generating learning and knowledge in a relational context. In this case, significant aspects of the context include the foregrounding of my LSD experience through writing 'my first twenty one years' and also the particular network of relationships leading me to read 'Dark Night, Early Dawn', and enabling me discover the author's email address.

Dear Chris

I came across your book 'dark night, early dawn' via a friend who had been recommended it by Peter Reason.

I am currently doing an action research based PhD with Peter Reason at Bath University. I asked Peter if he had your email as I wanted to write to you about your book

First of all I think you have produced a remarkable book. When I was about twenty, I had a very powerful experience with LSD, which I have ever since been trying to better understand and assimilate.

Over the years I have read many things which have helped me better understand the nature of the experiences I had when I took LSD. Reading your book, though, has really helped provide a coherent intellectual and spiritual framework to situate the experiences I had, and I wanted to thank you very much for doing this.

There are some points from your book I wanted to ask you about and/or comment on

- I. First of all I find some of the experiences you recount truly extraordinary. Where they echo my own experiences with LSD I can follow you, but some of them go way beyond mine. I wanted to ask you, as you are not explicit in the book - are the sessions you describe induced by LSD or some other

psychoactive drug? I imagine they are as they are so far away from everyday consciousness

2. One area in the description of your sessions that I find hard to follow (eg p. 219) is in your positing of some kinds of transcendental cosmic beings who have intentionally created the world and where the world is unfolding according to a 'cosmic plan'. Also on p. 221 you talk of "the dynamics of humanity's awakening as movements initiated and orchestrated by a single integrating intelligence".

Because I have read extensively in complexity theory and find it a useful and compelling framework, I find it hard to accept this vision of a planned universe, which unfolds according to the intentional acts of a supreme being/agency. I think it could look like this in retrospect as when one looks back at one's life and sees a pattern that one does not consciously experience in the living of a life, but I don't think that we can therefore attribute a causal agency at work determining in advance one's life pattern. I think the thrust of thinking in complexity is to indicate that life unfolds through complex, self-organising, emergent processes which are always inherently unpredictable

I wonder, if as you try to describe the phenomena you experienced, you revert to a language and way of thinking which posits a certain kind of intentional agency - in the same way that organisational theory (which is my area of work) often likes to see the transformation in an organisation as resulting and stemming from the actions of an exceptional leader with a brilliant strategy. I do think it is difficult to write outside the framework of this way of thinking because we are so deeply conditioned by it.

Again you say on p. 222; "What I had previously seen simply as individuals reincarnating in order to clear individual karma, I now experienced as a highly centralised decision to cleanse the human mindfield of its collective karmic legacy in order to prepare humanity for what is coming....it was the deliberate movement of the divine being that was evolving itself through the experiences of our species...."

I wonder if again you are positing some causal agency that is over and above the living systems in which it is embedded.

I think there is a good argument to make from complexity about the emergence of properties of a whole system that are different from its parts (eg the existence and properties of a species mind, in the same way that individual consciousness can be seen to be the emergent property of the collection of neurones in the physical brain) but I don't think the properties of the whole exist apart from and determine the parts. I think you give causal primacy to the whole and imbue it with an intentionality which is emergent rather than planned. I also wonder if you over-personify this by describing it as a being or as Divinity rather than as a distributed presence embedded in all the parts of the system

3. The other area I am less convinced about is what I think is your essentially optimistic vision arising from the ecological crisis. Like you, and others, I am increasingly concerned about the increasing erosion of many life systems and their supporting systems on the planet. I guess too like in any crisis, such as within an individual, a marriage, or an organisation, the crisis has the potential for growth and transformation. But I fear that history indicates that the effects of the coming crisis are more likely to precipitate a variety of fascism as a form of social organisation as people become more fearful and insecure than to lead to more enlightened forms of social organisation.

I know you do acknowledge that there will be great suffering ahead. Perhaps I have less confidence and have not had the kinds of experiences that have led you to have faith in a more awakened outcome to this process.

I hope you experience the comments I make as attempts to engage you in dialogue rather than as critical points. I really enjoyed and was hugely stimulated by your book, and was heartened to see that it is possible to combine a rigorous intellectual approach with profound experiential work.

I think the comments I make too are part of my attempt to link the work you have done into frameworks that I am working with and find useful in situating my life and work

I would be pleased to correspond further with you about this if you have time and the interest to respond

Best wishes Paul Roberts

In his email response of 6th February 2002, Christopher Bache gave an extremely full reply – over 2500 words. Whilst I would dearly like to reproduce this here as I think it is extremely interesting, I can see that for the purposes of this PhD it may be inappropriate to extensively quote someone else's work. I was delighted to receive such a considered and informed response to my questions. This prompted a further email from me in reply dated 17th February 2002. Again I reproduce the email in full to indicate the elaboration and interweaving of ideas occasioned from our correspondence.

Chris

Thanks for your very full and thoughtful and thought-provoking response to my comments on your book. I thought I would respond to some of the points raised in your mail. If this stimulates you to respond further, I would welcome that but all in its own time.

And thanks too for answering the question I asked you about the exact origin of your experiences so frankly. I was also intrigued by a comment you made in your book about needing to stop your sessions for a while because of the strain they were placing your family under.

I can see your point about the ideas of emergence, self-organisation and unpredictability which are arising in complexity and which offer a challenge to the traditional Newtonian-Cartesian scientific paradigm being applicable primarily to the 'normal' space-time universe and that other perspectives outside our usual ideas of space-time can exist. This does make sense to me. I think the difficulty here is knowing on what basis then to think about how these very different ideas can have validity. Because I can see that such ideas cannot be validated within the normal frames of reference. Someone like Karl Popper the philosopher of science would argue too that such ideas cannot be open to falsification. I think it is because you have had such profound experiences in your sessions that you can know the experiential validity of these ideas. But how then to communicate and persuade others who have not had such experiences and who would claim and thereby dismiss that your experiences are simply drug induced confusion.

Certainly my own major experience with LSD, many years ago now, (and I think that this one time I had a particularly pure form of the drug), showed and convinced me, (and I was completely and frighteningly unprepared for this), that it is possible to experience the world in a fundamentally different ontological way. I had thought that taking LSD would be like having a set of wild and different

psychedelic perceptual shifts - I had not appreciated how the LSD experience would change the nature of myself and the basis of the ground of my experience. And I have not been able to dismiss these experiences as merely hallucinatory - there was a quality to them of being real in an entirely different way that we usually think of reality - and I have continued to find aspects of these experiences echoed in writings about mystical experiences.

And I can see that because I did not experience the kind of purposeful intelligence you describe it is hard for me to follow you there. I wonder about how you find this with others. You must have had such unusual and extraordinary experiences that it must be hard to communicate them to others in ways that others can make sense of - though I think your book, at least for me, is successful in doing this. On another level, and this is something that I have found difficult myself, I also wonder how easy you find it to assimilate these experiences into our more normal everyday lives of making a living, being with friends and family etc. I seem to remember from your book that you also engage in a regular spiritual practice, which I imagine must be important to ground the experiences in a more everyday reality.

I think you make an excellent point about the evidence from reincarnation casting huge doubt on our traditional views of consciousness and not seeing consciousness as being primarily rooted in and determined by matter. Again my own experience with LSD indicated to me that reincarnation could be a real possibility.

Also I agree with you that one encouraging idea we can take from chaos and complexity is the possibility of rapid overall system change triggered by a small change in part of the system (the 'butterfly effect'). It is interesting to see how in the field of management and organisational development where I work the ideas from complexity are being absorbed into mainstream ideas about organisation (the new steps to create business success) and coming across for the most part as business as usual.

I also find it interesting how some of these ideas are surfacing in both popular and intellectual culture. For example, when I saw the film 'The Lord of the Rings', it seemed to me that one implicit message in it, as exemplified by the figure of Frodo Baggins, is that one apparently small act of love or courage can spiritually transform a world.

Also I am currently reading the trilogy of books by Phillip Pullman - 'Northern Lights', 'The Subtle Knife' and 'The Amber Spyglass'. These are meant to be for children but they are wonderful, intelligent and hugely creative novels. In fact in England, Phillip Pullman has just received a major literary prize. In these novels, he is exploring themes such as our relationship with our souls, the existence of other worlds to our own, and other non-human forms of intelligent consciousness that humans can interact with.

So I can see that these themes are surfacing in many ways and I'm glad to hear that you remain optimistic!

With best wishes Paul Roberts

At this point the correspondence ended as I did not receive a further reply to this email.

These were not the only ramifications from this autobiographical writing. In 2001, around the turn of the year, prompted by a conversation in a group of chief executives I was working with, I registered with the Friends Reunited web-site. One of the more immediate responses I had was from Bob, who had also been a member of the 'Upminster Fun Gang'. We quickly struck up an extended email correspondence, swapping memories and relaying any current news of people from that time. Encouraged by his shared interest in this period from our common past, I sent him a copy of 'My first twenty one years.' I found his response encouraging and noted how it had stimulated other memories for him. In an email dated 24th February 2002, he said:

"Read your bio. last night, for someone who was there, albeit for a short time, I found it incredibly atmospheric. Those nicknames....will always remember Lean, but had forgotten Tim "Goon", Graeme" Haggis" and especially" Puscle". I too cannot remember how he got that one, or the fact that he was an accomplished musician even though we spent a lot of time in that big house of his next to the station."

"Was working in Upminster one day during last summer and had an hour to kill so I parked in the Tithe barn car park and sat in the middle of the Rec...Jeez it all came flooding back, endless long hot summer days when we lived over there playing football and cricket or just lazing about 'til it got dark. Could see your house and the distant oil refinery chimney that [NAME DELETED] used to scream" Barad

D'ur on the horizon" at when it was dark and we were coming home from the
Masons Arms."

I find these lines of Bob's wonderfully evocative. (If this were being read now on my
web-site, there would be a hyper-link to the sound of Bruce Springsteen's 'My
Hometown'.)

Consequent to mine and Bob's correspondence, and with the aid of the Friends
Reunited web-site, we began to make contact with other people from our teens. This
surfaced and brought to life the network of relationships, which had exercised
considerable vitality and influence in our teens – at least for me, and I began to see for
others too. Over a year the momentum of this grew, greatly facilitated by email, and
culminated in two reunions in August and September 2002 both held at the Masons
Arms in Upminster, the pub we used to frequent. The reunion was a strange experience
– I found the juxtaposition of the past and the present bewildering and enchanting. Some
of the people I had not seen for thirty years were instantly familiar. Others were
completely unrecognisable. As I spoke with people, images of them in their teens
morphed onto their current features and I could see mannerisms and aspects of
personality in the present that I recognised from the past. The most interesting
conversations were those where, alongside the inevitable narrative curiosity of
discovering how everyone's lives had unfolded, there was some mutual reflection on the
meaning of that time in our lives.

I also sent my autobiographical writing to two old friends who were unable to make the
reunion. One of them replied in an email dated 20th September 2002

Diane and I have both read your "autobiography" and it is better written than many
of the manuscripts she brings home from her work as a publisher. It brought back
many memories of Upminster. I never had the disjunction and recognition that you
had, as my parents still live there and I visit every couple of weeks.

I had forgotten that you lived in Forth Road, but now I remember playing in your
bedroom with you and Matthew, [you had a tape recorder] Do you remember
much of the Cruise to Bergen, Copenhagen & Amsterdam? So [NAME DELETED]
cheated in your I I plus! Amazing! I remember Mr Troughton's quizzes. I think I was
quite good & enjoyed them tremendously.

It is important to understand that I did not write this first part of my autobiography with the intentions of renewing acquaintance with my teenage friends in mind. What I am pointing to here is the unfolding, unplanned consequences of engaging in the writing, which includes the power of the writing to both evoke my past and re-stimulate connection for me, and its power to evoke others' memories and feelings too. If I had not written this autobiography, I'm not sure that I would have registered with Friends Reunited and then diligently, consciously, and with interest, followed up the contacts made. Again I am not claiming that the writing directly caused this complex pattern of interactions to develop; it was one significant strand in a complex web of mutual influences.

Having felt the value of this initial autobiographical writing, I embarked, later the same year, on the second part of my autobiographical writing. This is reproduced next.

Section three: my second twenty one years

"In a time of faith, scepticism is the most intolerable of all insults"

From "The War and the Intellectuals"

by Randolph Silliman Bourne & Carl Resek (1999)

Early Career Moves

In London, in the summer of 1975, just at the onset of punk rock, I joined together with the friends and girlfriends of friends of my final year in Cambridge to help set up a squatting community, literally a stone's throw from Clapham Junction station. Then, it was a neglected rundown area, still at pre-gentrification stage - no trace of the French bakeries, Italian coffee shop, branch of Oddbins and huge Blockbuster Video, which now line the entrance to the station. Half of the street that was the foundation of the local squatting community was made up of boarded up, semi-derelict, three-storey terraced Victorian houses. Fortunately one of my friends was highly practical, and entering these houses, re-establishing the electricity and gas supplies, and doing the necessary building repairs was surprisingly straightforward.

In relatively little time we had initiated a thriving squatting community, made up of a mixture of ex-students like ourselves and local homeless people. We had considerable ambitions for our community. We took a group of children made up of the official residents of the street and the squatting community away on a camping weekend. Later, when I did a similar activity as a social worker, and had to negotiate the various bureaucratic systems to do something similar, I appreciated better the informal community work we had accomplished. When the council finally got around to repossessing the houses, we were in the middle of constructing a brewery in one house and had plans for a cinema in the attic of the same house.

Looking for suitable work in line with my social and political ideology and aspirations at the time, I obtained a job working for a small voluntary organisation called 'Homeless in Britain'. My main role was to be a member of a team of six people collectively sharing the running of a hostel for forty-five single homeless women in the middle of Soho. The hostel had been set up in the wake of the famous TV documentary about female homelessness, 'Cathy Come Home', and aimed to offer a very different kind of milieu for homeless women than the more traditional strictly rule bound and regimented regimes typically set up by organisations like the Salvation Army. There were very few rules in the hostel, in fact only two that I can remember – no drug pushing and no violence.

Its governing spirit was taken from two sources. One was a form of late sixties social work practice called 'radical non-interventionism' - who were we as middle class social workers to tell others how to live their lives? This drew its rationale and inspiration from the growing influence of radical leather-jacketed academics carving out the field of sociology of deviance, a key figure of which was notably parodied in Malcolm Bradbury's (2000) novel, 'The History Man'. The other source was the Zen Buddhism of one of the founders of the hostel, a man called David Brandon (1976) who wrote an interesting book called 'Zen in the Art of Helping.'

It is easy to mock the pretensions and naivety of this approach but at the time it was a genuine attempt to do something innovative and part of the way in which the influences of the sixties were challenging and changing social work practices. And, in its own way, the hostel actually worked. Women who, because of their behavioural idiosyncrasies, would not have found accommodation elsewhere, and many of whom had been thrown out of and banned from other hostels, could live amongst the anarchy and craziness which formed daily life at the Soho hostel.

At first this work was exciting and interesting. I was immersed in a very foreign milieu and experiencing at first hand and trying to put into practice the ideas of R.D. Laing and the other anti-psychiatrists I had encountered at University about not labelling people as mentally ill and questioning accepted definitions of madness. Basically, though, I was a young man with a head full of ideas and not enough emotional resources to cope with the extreme lifestyles of the women I was working with. One day in the kitchen, the drunken son of one of the residents held an empty milk bottle poised over my head for a few minutes, engaging with me in a macho 'chicken' game of would I dare him to dare to smash it over my head. Fortunately good sense prevailed over machismo and eventually the stand-off was ended by a large Nigerian resident who had taken control of the kitchen storming him from behind, and the two of us hustled him out of the hostel front door. I had helped precipitate this encounter by unwittingly walking towards him pointing the knife in my hand that I had been using to peel potatoes. Another day, when fortunately I was not on duty, a woman threw herself onto the Soho street from the top storey of the hostel and killed herself. Over time I found it increasingly difficult to cope with such experiences. I had a growing sense of flatness and disillusionment which led me to change jobs and work for the South London Family Services Unit, another voluntary organisation. I was a social worker with a small but specialised caseload of what were then called 'multi-problem' families, (now less pejoratively referred to as 'families suffering from chronic stress'), in the London boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark.

A different kind of course

One of my former colleagues in the hostel, who I had become quite friendly with, had talked to me about a part-time diploma course he was attending at a higher education institution. In September 1977, I enrolled on this programme. I was part of a new intake of about sixty people doing this course in a variety of different formats – through evening attendance, day attendance, residential weeks and residential weekends when the entire course group came together.

I loved this course. For the first time in my life I experienced another possibility for education - that it could be liberating. The course grew out of the humanistic psychology movement of the sixties, particularly sensitivity group training and encounter groups. It was based on a philosophy of experiential learning, encouraging participants to find out about interpersonal behaviour, self awareness, group dynamics and emotional expression through the experience of being and working together in groups. The course

was a crucible in which psychology, psychotherapy, politics, spirituality, feminism, artistic expression, and personal development met and mingled, not in a theoretical way, but through the lived interaction of the people involved. There was a wild, mould-breaking aspect to the course. I remember vividly my first encounter with one of the tutors and how he side-stepped my every expectation of what a teacher might be like. He eventually left teaching to be a drummer in a punk rock band, which achieved some short-lived success and notoriety.

The other two teachers on this course were also very influential in my life. One became my wife and mother of my two sons. The other became my therapist, trainer and supervisor over the next fifteen years. And not just the teachers were life changing. Soon after starting this course, with two other men from the course, I moved into a hard-to-let council flat on a run-down estate in the Kentish Town area of North London. Some London councils were experimenting at the time with changing the social make-up of their more run-down and least popular estates by letting property to groups of single people (that families on their housing waiting lists did not want). These two men became my closest friends. One of them still is.

The course was an initiation to a life-long journey of, for want of a better word, personal development and exploration of the relationship between individuals, groups and organisation. It showed that learning could be involving, absorbing, personal, political, risky and exhilarating compared to the abstract, mainly detached theorising I had encountered at Cambridge. The course was constituted as a two-year part-time programme. The intake I had joined was its final year because the Institution it was located in was trying to rid itself of its past radical image and, under the leadership of a newly appointed vice-chancellor, rapidly disbanding all the courses that had helped promote such an image. The students on the final year of the programme were determined to continue the course for a further year and were successful in finding a new home for it at an adult education centre, where it continued to run for the next seven years or so.

Bioenergetics

The course was also an introduction to the different humanistic psychotherapies, which were gaining ground and establishing their own distinctive psychological tradition in opposition to the longer established schools of behaviourism and psychoanalysis. One of the teachers on the course was training in bioenergetics, a powerful therapeutic method

coined by Alexander Lowen, an American doctor who was trained by Wilhelm Reich. Reich had been one of Freud's original circle in Vienna, but, like many of that circle, eventually fell out with Freud and set up his own school of therapy. Reich, in many ways and especially with his holistic perspectives on physical and mental illness, was ahead of his time, and trying to overcome the basic mind-body dualism which he saw still at the heart of Freud's work, despite its revolutionary exploration of the unconscious and sexuality. Reich's (1949) fundamental development of Freudian theory was to suggest that there were links between the way that psychological character is formed and muscular patterns of expressing and holding tension in the body. For Reich and his followers, such as Alexander Lowen (1979) and Stanley Keleman (1985), we are our bodies as much as our mental processes. A skilled bioenergetic practitioner could read the emotional biography and key internal and external conflicts of a person from their body in a similar way as an expert forester could read the life history of a tree from an examination of the cross-section of its trunk.

In terms of method, bioenergetics led to an emphasis on 'bodywork', that is working with the body to release and contain tension, as well as engaging with the traditional 'talking cure' pioneered by analysis. It also led to a view of emotional life as the primary medium in which to engage and work therapeutically. Reich (1948) saw many of the ills of western civilisation, most controversially cancer, occasioned by the repression of feeling and the denial of the body. Alexander Lowen (1977) had developed a set of physical exercises which were designed to help put a person more in touch with their body and to facilitate greater emotional expressiveness which could be done individually and also in 'movement' groups.

The course provided exposure to this method and its practise by one of the teachers. For the purposes of this writing I'll call her Simone. As practised by Simone, bioenergetics offered a powerful way of breaking through barriers that other therapies seemed unable to effect. Like the Heineken ad, it refreshed the parts other therapies could not reach. Simone was starting to gather around her a number of people both on my year of the course and from previous years who wanted to pursue their own therapy with her and many of whom also wanted to train with her. One of the men in the flat I was living in had started therapy with her and I decided to follow in his tracks. Thus began a process that was to be central in my life for the next fifteen years.

Whilst I was beginning therapy and going through the two year group-work course programme, I continued to work at the South London Family Service Unit, based near

Camberwell Green. I did further training in play therapy with individual and small groups of children and also family therapy at the Maudsley hospital. My work involved a caseload of about a dozen families who typically were in poor housing and had low income as well as finding family relationships problematic. Fortunately I was never placed in a situation where I had to decide whether to take a child away from its parents into the care of the local authority; the closest I came to this was helping a young teenage girl leave her father and return to her mother in Ireland. The atmosphere at the Unit where I worked was generally good. The Tory press was only just beginning its onslaught on the social work profession using a few well-documented cases where social workers had failed to protect young children adequately. At the Unit, though, there was still an optimistic mood and the belief that our work could and did make a difference.

Whilst continuing as a social worker I was becoming more involved in the world of therapy and bioenergetics. As well as attending regular individual therapy, I also joined a movement group, which met once a week on a weekday evening. I started a relationship with Carmel, (again not her real name), one of the full-time lecturers on the group-work course in 1978, and moved in to live with her about a year later. Carmel was starting to practice as a psychotherapist. She was close friends with Simone, and a founding member of a training group Simone had set up. Carmel was also instrumental in helping start the organisation Simone set up, in which she became a leading figure.

In mid-1979 I also joined Simone's training group. My social world was now revolving around the people I had met on the group-work course and others involved in bioenergetic training and therapy. Many of the people in this world had backgrounds in left wing and community politics, were exclusively white and heterosexual, typically in their twenties/early thirties and were mostly working in the professions of social work, community work and teaching.

In mid-1980, I left my social work role after three years with no immediately clear sense of what I would do next. I saw a vacancy for a job with a local authority Social Services Department at a newly opened Children and Family Centre working with young people at risk of receiving custodial centres from the Court. Carmel was keen to move to be nearer to Simone, who was now living in this part of England, so when I was offered the job we moved out of London at the end of 1980. Initially we lived in a house that was attached to the Centre where I was based but in the next year we bought a house together. We were the first people to move out of London to be geographically closer to Simone and her family. Over the following years more and more people who were

part of the group clustering around Simone moved to this part of the country. At the same time this group began to develop a distinct identity and acquire a name – I'll call it 'The Community' for this account.

'The Community'

Given what subsequently happened in my relationship with Simone and other people in "The Community", it is not so straightforward and easy now to convey the excitement and sense of purpose I felt through my involvement with 'The Community'. The experience of bioenergetic therapy with Simone opened up my emotional life to me in a way I had never before experienced. I discovered deep reservoirs of rage in myself that I was previously unaware of and also a longing for fuller and more authentic contact with other people. I felt much more physically and emotionally alive. For the first time in my life I felt part of a genuine closely knit community (or tribe) in which I had a place.

I realised that some of my earlier political interests and motivations were rooted in personal unhappiness and, like many of my generation who made a similar discovery, shifted my attention from the outer world of class relations and capitalist exploitation to my inner world and its preoccupations. And at the same time, I strongly believed in the possibilities of this kind of therapy for social as well as individual transformation. After all, Reich had been an early member of the German communist party before they threw him out because they thought his emphasis on sex education for working class youth was diverting the masses from their historically destined role in the class struggle and the creation of a socialist society. This was, too, the era in which feminism had transformed the political arena, in which the personal was also being defined as the political, and in which working on one's personal development could still be construed as political action - Stephen Covey and his seven habits for highly effective global capitalism were still a decade away. In her book, 'No Logo', (2000), Naomi Klein charts a similar personal journey when she reflects on her own experience as a student activist in the eighties. She points out how the identity politics of the seventies and eighties switched focus away from the external manifestation of corporate and political power to issues of gender and race representation in the media.

Furthermore, within therapy I had experiences that could best be described as spiritual, touching on the transpersonal dimension of existence, the movement beyond the limitations of a bounded primarily ego-based sense of self to a sense of wider connection with the natural and social world. These experiences offered some further grounding of

my earlier LSD experiences. In one therapeutic session, I had an intensely felt vision of the planet to which I felt intrinsically connected, like the famous picture taken on the first moon landing of earth seen from outer space. And most significantly within 'The Community' I felt that my work had greater meaning through being part of something bigger than just myself and my career ambitions. At the time I found this beautifully expressed in a book called 'Man on the Threshold', (1985), by Bernard Lievegoed, a Dutch anthroposophist, in which he talks about the 'modern mystery path';

"The human being does not have to attempt this path alone. It can also take its course in a group of people who are connected in their life of will through working together, which at the same time signifies a shared destiny. I once called such a community a 'responsibility community'. Each alone takes his own path of development in such a community, but in this he depends heavily on the others. All consider it their path of development to be awake to what the other could and should do. This can be expressed in words or by creating situations in which the other can become creative, and this applies mutually. An archetype of such a community is the Pentecostal community of the disciples, or 'The Community' of the Round Table of King Arthur."

More recently I have seen the same point expressed by Mike Daisey (2002) in his extremely entertaining and perceptive account of his three years with Amazon in Seattle.

"I can't tell you how exciting, how stirring it was to be in the thick of something so deadly earnest, to be given permission to invest myself in a group. These people, my co-workers, were serious about our work, and everything was on the line."
(p. 48).

Simone was herself part of a training group run by a charismatic therapist. This woman had set up a community outside London, all of whom were deeply involved with her own form of bioenergetic practice. Simone seemed both drawn to the vitality and talent of this woman and at the same time uncomfortable with some of the dynamics of the group she had created around her. Simone was determined not to repeat the same mistakes she saw her own trainer making - to become a western therapeutic guru with a band of largely unquestioning devotees. To this end a lot of time, energy, and money was taken up in 'The Community' exploring the power dynamics between people and our transference relationships with Simone. We were constantly 'working on' our own feelings about and relationships with one another.

An important part of 'The Community' became an ongoing 'couples group', in which I participated for five years. This was a forum which individuals attended as couples and explored their intimate partner relationships. It was a powerful forum for generating closeness between its participants as the issues raised in each couple relationship had an immediacy and resonance for everyone in the group.

Over time, as more of the people within this community started practising as therapists, the size and apparent importance of our work grew. With a female colleague and fellow trainee, I set up and co-led a one-year evening course in group dynamics at an adult education centre, loosely based on the group-work course I had attended. From 1983-88, I co-ran a therapy group with the same colleague that drew most of its membership from the people completing the group dynamics course. Other people too who were members of Simone's training group were setting up their own practices as individual and group therapists. People were also creatively applying this work to other areas – singing and voice work, drama, single sex groups, workshops on family relationships. In 1984 and 1985, there were two large residential summer workshops held, first for about 60 people and then for 100 people, over the period of a week. These were very powerful events for both participants and those of us involved in putting on these events.

At the same time as our work was developing, our lives were becoming increasingly entangled. By and large I welcomed and embraced this entangled involvement. One of the people who had taken on running the original group-work course at its second home, and who had developed a significant psychotherapy practice of his own, once described 'The Community' as akin to a therapeutic community who did not physically live together. Through participating in groups and training workshops together and sharing problematic and intimate issues in our lives, strong bonds of friendship were generated. The therapy itself, with its potential for deep emotional catharsis, led to people being strongly moved and affected by one another's 'work'. Before this involvement with 'The Community', I had not felt, nor have felt subsequently, such a strong connection and identification with a group of people.

This pattern of close and intense involvement is common to many psychological traditions, even more traditionally conservative psychoanalytically based training programmes. Janet Malcolm describes this in her book, 'Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession (1981)'. She writes of a New York émigré analyst:

"Her entire life was taken up with psychoanalytical concerns: during the day she saw patients, at night she went to meetings at the Institute, and when she and her husband went out to dinner or entertained at home it was always with analysts. Other people fall away she explained. There is less and less to talk about with people on the 'outside' who don't look at things the way analysts do." (p. 83).

Simone saw herself, in common with nearly all practitioners of humanistic therapy at the time, as going beyond the strictly delineated boundaries and unnecessary over-formalised restrictions of traditional analysis. It was possible to be friends with her, to have dinner together, to be her patient, to be her supervisee and trainee, to be in a 'couples' group with her as the leader, and at times to work as colleagues together. I thought that we were part of the brave new world challenging and redefining traditional therapeutic practice.

And at the same time we believed we were aware of the potential dangers of this situation. Simone had first hand experience of the dynamics, which centred around her trainer, which seemed uncomfortably close to being a form of cult. In fact, this trainer appeared in national newspapers a few years ago through her involvement in a custody case in which she was accused of running a cult. There was, though, a strongly held belief in "The Community", that if one could fully make conscious and express the feelings involved in dynamics of power, authority, dependence, counter-dependence, rivalry, envy and jealousy, and if one could fully own and be responsible for one's negativity, (defined as the particular ways each person tried to control and hold on to their natural life energy), limiting blocks could be broken through, and the energy held in negative behavioural, physical and emotional patterns could be liberated for creative purposes.

Within 'The Community', the methods used to work with people in a group setting were often confrontational. A group would typically begin with Simone asking who wanted to 'work' that day and follow the 'hotseat' pattern of therapeutic engagement, generally credited as deriving from Fritz Perls (1969), the founder of Gestalt psychology, who had influenced a whole generation of humanistic therapists in the Gestalt and encounter movements. This necessitated the person who wanted to 'work' usually standing in the centre of the group and having the attention of Simone and others in the group. Other people in the group would be encouraged to respond with their feelings to the unfolding 'work' of the person. Sometimes this could lead to a series of angry encounters between people, involving a lot of shouting and occasional physical

confrontation. At other times, it led to moments of extraordinary tenderness and compassion.

Some initial reflections on leadership and followers

Looking back now, I think that, as a group, and like many other groups, we were unconsciously living out a deeply ingrained, western cultural myth of redemption and salvation. Bioenergetic theory replaced Christian 'original sin' with a more optimistic view of the inner core of human nature. David Boadella, a leading theoretician and practitioner of bioenergetics, with whom both Simone and Carmel were in training and supervision with for the first five years of 'The Community', liked to challenge the underlying pessimism of orthodox Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalytical theory by claiming that "joy was the most deeply repressed human emotion". Personal salvation lay in rediscovering this inner core of love and joyful life-affirming energy which meant working through the outer layers of social conditioning and defensive patterns which were deeply built into the body and personality.

Simone was a charismatic, powerful and immensely talented therapist. She had an extraordinary gift for enabling people to find places in themselves of genuine depth of feeling, and was hugely creative in working with people's energetic bodily and psychological processes to uncover forgotten past experiences of both trauma and joy to create possibilities for change in the present. Jungian theory suggests that, as with any gifted therapist, there was a shadow-side to this capacity. A Jungian commentator I read later, (and whose work I can no longer unfortunately find!), noted that the 'god-like' capacity to work at a deep level with peoples' fundamental life issues raises the temptation for a particularly gifted therapist to identify themselves with the divine. Simone was believed, by herself and others, to know the 'truth' about a person or situation. Some of the stories that informally circulated in 'The Community' were stories, which proved Simone's perspective and/or intuition to be unfailingly correct. There is no doubt that some of us in 'The Community', and certainly at least myself, wanted to believe that Simone had access to a truth ordinarily denied to most people.

In his highly readable and thoughtful study of gurus, 'Feet of Clay' (1997), Antony Storr writes about a number of figures he regards as gurus. These range from benevolent figures such as Jesus and St Ignatius of Loyola to destructive cult-leaders such as Jim Jones and David Koresh, and include central figures in the history of psychology such as Freud and Jung. He defines gurus (P. xi) as "teachers who claim special knowledge of

the meaning of life, and who therefore feel entitled to tell others how life should be lived.” He suggests that one distinguishing feature of a guru is their claim to have discovered and to know the ‘truth’. Alongside this is allied huge conviction and great certainty. Storr says, in exploring the dynamics of the guru-disciple relationship; “Certainty is hugely seductive, and certainty is offered by all successful leaders: it is an important part of their charisma.” (P. 217).

Storr thinks it is a feature of all leaders to be idealised. He uses the key psychoanalytical concepts of transference and projection to describe ways in which leaders are both intensely loved and hated. Interestingly, too, he suggests that this emotional dynamic based on idealisation may be necessary for adults to continue to learn. This is similar to an email comment Peter Reason made on 15th August 2001 in response to reading this account that;

“I have come to believe (from experience) that the role of all great teachers is to let you down. That is the point, in a way, you learn enough to integrate into your own way of being, you find the shortfalls of the most supposedly enlightened person, and you move on.”

Developments within ‘The Community’

Between 1979 and 1988, I participated whole-heartedly in my therapy, training and supervision with Simone and the development of ‘The Community’ as a group of practising therapists. All my significant relationships were mediated in this environment. In October 1982, my first son was born – a profoundly moving home birth with a private midwife at which Simone was also present. She and her partner became my son’s godparents. In June 1984, Carmel and I were married in the local church, a few hundred yards from where we lived. We were the second pairing in the ‘couples group’ to get married and in the next years many others within the ‘couples group’ were married. These became significant events in ‘The Community’s’ social calendar. People ‘worked’ on their plans for their weddings in the ‘couples’ group’, and the weddings themselves usually occasioned a wealth of feelings and responses, which would surface in the different groups that Simone and others led.

In 1985 my second son was born. In contrast to the long drawn out labour of his elder brother he was almost delivered in the car on the way to the hospital. Just over a year after his birth, I left my wife as I had fallen in love with the woman I had been running a

therapy group with. My attraction to her and feelings for her had been growing for a number of years, to the point where I thought she was the love of my life and that I could no longer stay with my wife. I lived for a short while on my own in various bed-sit arrangements and then went to live with the woman I had fallen in love with. Our relationship could not stand the guilt and anguish I felt about leaving my young sons and marriage, and within a year our relationship had ended. In late 1987, I returned home to live with my parents for a short while - a humbling experience for someone in their early thirties – before buying a house on my own.

Prior to and during this period of acute personal turmoil, other significant events had been happening in 'The Community'. Simone had split up with her partner, a good friend of mine, who, consequent to the ending of their relationship, moved to Los Angeles. A baby who was a very similar age to my second son died tragically. Two of the leading therapists with substantial individual and group practices, who were working under the umbrella of 'the Community', ceased their practices amidst accusations that they were intimidating or exploiting their patients.

In the autumn of 1987, Simone decided to disband 'The Community' and to no longer continue working as a therapist, trainer and supervisor. She had become disillusioned with what she was trying to achieve in 'The Community' partly due, in her mind now, to the activities of two of the leading therapists that she had trained. She later moved home with her new husband to pursue a different career before then returning to practice as a psychotherapist.

Second marriage and expulsion from Eden

In the years subsequent to the official ending of 'The Community', I continued to work as a freelance consultant. I had left my work at the Children and Family Centre and set up my own practice as a psychotherapist and freelance consultant. I began training and consultancy working mainly in the public sector, offering courses in group-work, working with young people, management training, and then extended my work to management training in the private sector. The ending of 'The Community' was not a major blow to my working life as I was finding it increasingly difficult managing the joint demands and different schedules of a psychotherapy practice and freelance consultancy. I decided to focus solely on working as a trainer and consultant and started attending conferences and networking with others in this field.

At one of these conferences, I met two people who had recently set up on their own as independent consultants and who lived together. We got on well, and in subsequent meetings, decided to create an informal association between us. From 1986, I started working fairly frequently with Anna, the female partner of the two. Over time we became friends, and then, following the ending of the relationship I had left my first wife for and the ending of her partnership, lovers. In 1989 we decided to live together.

After 'The Community' had officially been disbanded I continued my friendships with many of the people who had been part of it. At the same time I also started attending workshops at a psychotherapy training institute in London. The workshops I attended were part of a Gestalt training programme for therapists and organisational consultants. They were run by Camilla, another charismatic and extremely gifted female therapist. It was illuminating for me to experience someone else work therapeutically. This other person seemed to be able to evoke the same depth of feeling and opportunities for personal transformation that I had experienced with Simone through the use of methods that were less confrontational. Also there was a much greater diversity of people at this other training Institute than I was used to from 'The Community' – a wider age range, people from non-white ethnic groups, and a significant gay presence. There is nothing like participating in another culture or 'tribe' to throw light on one's own culture and tribal affiliations – some of the taken for granted assumptions I had formed in 'The Community' began to open themselves up for questioning.

In December 1990, one of my two best friends from the time of our flat sharing in Kentish Town was married. This was the occasion for a falling out between him and me, on one side, and the third member of our original trio. Our friend felt that my other friend had not shown sufficient acknowledgement of his past involvement in 'The Community' at his wedding. This led to a major split between the three of us, which has never been healed. I felt that my friend had the right to choose the wedding he wanted, which led to a terrible row with the other friend.

During this time I was also planning to be married for the second time. This row with my friend, who I had asked to be my best man, marred the build up to my wedding. I already had conflicting feelings about getting married for a second time. I drove down to Wales and spoke to Simone about these feelings. She advised me not to go ahead with the wedding, based on my own doubts and the background of recently leaving my first marriage and subsequent ending of the relationship I had then started. This led me into a state of extreme inner conflict and consequent difficulties with my partner. We spent

two days in which the colour seemed to drain from the world. On the third morning we woke up to a bright, clear, frosty, blue-skied winter morning. My partner suggested going to a local church to pray about our situation. I decided to go to the church in which I had previously been married. From that moment I had an unexpected sense of grace about the unfolding events of the day. A chain of events happened which led to my partner and I finding a vicar who was prepared to marry us in church, despite both of us being divorced. I believed that from a situation, which had appeared irredeemably blocked, and beyond the resolution of the individual and joint wills of my partner and I, a miracle had occurred. This helped give me the confidence and faith to go ahead and marry again.

Prior to my second wedding, I had seen the French film 'Romualdo and Juliette'. This tells the story of an unlikely romance between Romualdo, the white already-married managing director of a large French business, and Juliette, the black cleaning lady that cleans his office at night. Towards the end of the film there is a wonderfully romantic wedding scene in which Romualdo and Juliette celebrate their marriage in the company of her children, his first wife and her new partner, and their many friends. Somehow for my wedding I hoped to achieve a similar resolution of the schisms around me. I was, unrealistically, hoping for another miracle.

For our wedding in April 1991, my partner and I invited many people, including Simone, from 'The Community' that I was still friendly with and people from the other training Institute that my partner knew well, as well as our immediate families of origin. Two different groupings met and mingled that day though the people from the other Institute had a distinctly less tribal image and sensibility than 'The Community'. Immediately after our wedding my partner and I went to New York for our honeymoon. When I returned I quickly realised that all was not well. My ex-wife told me that unexpectedly from her point of view a number of people who had not spoken to her for a while had contacted her and been critical of my wedding and me. She warned me to look after myself.

A few days later a letter arrived in the post from Simone. She had sent a copy of this letter to all the people involved in 'The Community' who had attended my wedding. Three days before receiving this letter I had met a friend from 'The Community' who had told me warmly how much he had enjoyed the wedding. On meeting him again a few days later after he had received the letter he now told me that Simone's letter had enabled him to see the situation differently.

To give a sense of this letter, I reproduce three major parts of it below, with the names changed.

"The form and content of your wedding and reception made it quite clear to me that you have already made the decision to go down a path which denies the body of experience you have gained with me. The group you have chosen to join are making you feel powerful by indulging you. You have gained a place in this group by using this body of experience learned with me as a power ploy and they have allowed you to do so, either because they do not recognise it or because it suits them. You obviously prefer this kind of power to facing the reality of who you are. Your marriage ceremony was an example of this self-deception and indulgence. The function of a church ceremony is to provide a structure in which you are reconciled to a higher authority, God's authority, and thereby create a healthy balance between your deeper self and your ego. You have vowed before god, witnessed by your community of friends, in a state of full awareness and consciousness to love and cherish Carmel 'til death do you part. You are entitled to be forgiven for having failed to keep your vows. You are entitled to God's blessing and help with your commitment to Anna. You are not entitled to manipulate that structure in the church service to suit yourself. Unfortunately your vicar indulged you in this."

"I am angry because I have made it quite clear to you what I thought about this and you ignored my advice while at the same time implicating me in your decisions. This pretending to seek my opinion and then using it politically is an abuse of me personally and goes against everything I have been teaching.

Your reception showed that while you wished to pay lip service to encompassing both 'the old Community' and your new one you are not able to do so. There was no feeling of celebrating together nor any place for everyone to do so had the feeling been there. Had there been any doubt about it your own speech revealed that your new priorities lie in power seeking, self-indulgence and denial of the truth."

"I cannot allow you to continue attempting to deceive me and those in 'the Community' who are trying to live their lives respecting the learning gained during the years we worked together. You have already caused enough confusion and hurt amongst them. You have chosen a different and opposing path to them and you must take it openly and alone, not try to have your cake and eat it. You have

found people who are prepared to acknowledge the kind of power you seek and this is obviously how you see yourself becoming your own man. In my opinion, obviously, it is superficial and your gains from it will cause damage to you and those around you. I can only warn you of the dangers and tell you there is no point in continuing to seek my advice as you have been doing over the past two years and ignoring it.".....

The effect of the letter on me was devastating. For years I had believed that Simone spoke with the voice of 'truth' and had identified my 'higher self', (to use the conceptual framework of psychosynthesis), with her. The letter then became an attack from this 'higher self'. Fortunately not everyone from 'The Community' unquestioningly accepted the letter. A few people said that their experience of my wedding was different and questioned Simone's motivation in sending such a letter. These people probably helped save my sanity. In addition, Carmel, my first wife was hugely supportive, an extremely generous act, given the circumstances in which I had left her.

The experience of receiving this letter resulted in great turmoil and confusion and led me slowly and agonisingly to review my whole experience of 'The Community'. Incidents I had been uncomfortable with and had pushed to the periphery of my awareness came back to me. I could see patterns of interaction where people who had been close to Simone and very involved in 'The Community' seemed suddenly thrust a long way from her and others' orbit. One obvious and common way to describe these dynamics is scapegoating. I read a book called 'the Scapegoat Complex' (1986) by Sylvia Brinton Perepa, a Jungian analyst, which I found very helpful. She says:

"Scapegoating, as it is currently practiced, means finding the one or ones who can be identified with evil or wrong-doing, blamed for it, and cast out from 'The Community' in order to leave the remaining members with a feeling of guiltlessness, atoned (at-one) with the collective standards of behaviour. It both allocates blame and serves to "inoculate against future misery and failure" by evicting the presumed cause of misfortune." (p. 9)

As I continued to painfully think about what had happened, I also had to contend with what I now saw as my own role in participating in the dynamics of scapegoating of others. Over a long time I had to rethink my involvement with 'The Community'. I had to try and sort out what was valuable and what was problematic, and try to come to terms with a sense of shame engendered by the accusations in Simone's letter. This was a painful but necessary awakening. A number of years later, I watched a television

documentary about a British woman who had been part of Bhagwan Sree Rajneesh's inner circle first in Poona and then in the utopian community he set up in Oregon. Bhagwan was an Indian guru with a huge western following who blended eastern mysticism and spiritual disciplines with western personal growth psychology. He achieved notoriety through his advocacy of greater permissiveness in sexual relations and through his growing accumulation of Rolls Royces, eventually numbering ninety-three. This British woman had been accused of conspiracy to murder by the authorities in Oregon after Bhagwan himself had fled 'The Community'. She was eventually convicted and spent a number of years in prison in America. She talked candidly about the way she realised afterwards how she had become involved in something destructive, and spoke movingly about how she was reconciling herself to this without devaluing and dishonouring the idealistic part of herself which had been drawn to the teachings of Bhagwan.

People who did not know the history of my involvement with 'The Community' were simply appalled if I showed or told them about the letter Simone had written. To them the letter was so obviously abusive that they could not really understand why I took it seriously and let it have such impact on me.

To conclude, and give additional context to, the more personal part of this story, I should add that I separated from my second wife in 1998, after nearly seven years of marriage. We were divorced in early 2001 and remain friends. Whilst I do not in any way want to attribute the break up of my marriage to the effect of Simone's letter, I do think it cast a dark cloud over the early years of our marriage.

An Archetypal Story

It has taken and is still taking me a long time to assimilate my experience of 'The Community' and Simone's letter. I have found that the work and writing which emotionally and intellectually has most helped me to understand what happened and make sense of it all is from a Jungian perspective. Somehow here the profound understanding of archetypal structures and dynamics and of the implacable movements of the individual psyche and collective unconscious seem to do justice to the complexity and depth of my experience. In a book called 'Psyche at work; workplace applications of Jungian analytical psychology' (1992), one of the editors, Murray Stein, comments that;

"We face the situation that the unconscious is powerfully projected onto organisational life, and that what we meet there is also the spirit of the

organisation's unconscious. Both are often uncontained and therefore potentially exceedingly dangerous for the individual's emotional stability." (p. 6)

He goes on:

"When we enter an organisation and our unconscious becomes activated by our relationship to its other members and structures, we typically enter into a state of unconscious identity with some part of it, with a role, a function, or a position. This identification is most likely based on an archetype that the group psyche needs to have represented and enacted, and the individual's unconscious is ready to identify with the needed archetype and to participate in it. Jung called this state of unconscious identification participation mystique (1948, par. 253). This refers to a state of nondifferentiation between subject and object, in this case between oneself and an aspect of the organisation. As psyches mingle and merge, the person begins enacting an archetypal role offered, or even demanded, by the group unconscious." (p. 9)

This kind of analysis draws attention to the unconscious dimension of group and organisational life, and to the power and force of these archetypal dynamics. It was part of the belief system in 'The Community', or at the least what I believed, that we could overcome these, that we could bleach and nullify the organisational shadow in the white heat of emotional catharsis.

In the last ten years, I have been keenly interested to read and hear about a range of situations in which idealistic communities have encountered difficulties. A distinctive feature of these situations is the utopian nature and explicitly psychological and spiritual characters of these settings. When I attended a conference on 'Buddhism and Psychology' held at Dartington a number of years back, once this subject was opened up at one of the workshops, everyone had a story to tell of different communities beset with problems related to the dynamics of leadership and membership.

In Andrew Harvey's recent book (2000), 'The Direct Path', he tells of his disillusionment with Mother Meera, a young Indian woman he had met and become a disciple of in 1978. In a previous book, 'The Hidden Journey', he had written eloquently and movingly of his profound spiritual experiences with Mother Meera and his deep devotion to her, a book which he says had helped turn Mother Meera into a 'worldwide cult'. He recounts how when his split with her became public, he received death threats and was denounced by former colleagues and friends. He likewise refers to being involved with a leading and

highly respected Tibetan Buddhist in 1990 and collaborating with him on a project about 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead'. He subsequently heard in 1994 that eleven of this teacher's woman pupils were suing him for sexual abuse.

Similarly in the UK, there was the well-publicised account of a charismatic young Church of England vicar. He had developed a significant youth following at a time when young people were increasingly uninvolved in organised religion, had introduced many innovations to the traditional church service, and had been hailed by leading figures such as the creation spiritualist Matthew Fox. He was then forced to resign because of inappropriate sexual relationships with a number of his close female followers.

I recently attended a workshop on the healing power of ritual, held on the Borders of Scotland. When I briefly told the story of my involvement in 'The Community' to a small group of participants on the workshop, it triggered the sharing of similar stories by three other participants who talked about their lengthy involvement with a spiritual community based on the work of Gurdjieff.

To be clear at this point, I am not saying that 'The Community' was identical to any of these groups and communities mentioned above. Talking now, ten years on, to a number of people who were involved with 'The Community' what is striking is the range of experience, and the very different sense that people have made of their involvement. Although we were all participating in the same community, what people took and learnt from their experience was radically different. Each person constellated a particular set of dynamics, or, following Stein earlier, each individual's unconscious interacted with the group unconscious in a very specific way. For some people, undoubtedly, it was a positive, life-affirming and life-changing experience. For others, including myself, I believe it was both highly developmental and simultaneously very wounding.

The commonality and frequency of occurrence of these stories begs the question as to what is at work in these phenomena. Beyond my individual story, in what way are these also archetypal psychological and spiritual stories of our times? What do these stories tell us about the social history, the collective spirit and collective unconscious of our times?

Explanations

Many social commentators have pointed out that since the fifties there has been an increased breaking down of the traditional sources of authority which have helped bind people together. Institutional sources of authority such as the monarchy, government, organised religion, the professions, the media and the family have come under increasing scrutiny and questioning. Other people point to the dominance of a materialist ideology, erosion of traditional communities through increased social mobility, and growth of a consumer society, which further fuel the vacuum of potential meaninglessness and lack of deep identity. This is fertile ground for any group or movement offering an awakening of powerful group or tribal identity and spiritual sense of purpose. Antony Storr (1997), writing about Jonestown, the utopian settlement Jim Jones established in Guyana, says that:

"It is evident that some people who had been alienated from conventional society felt themselves part of a new community in which they were for the first time accepted and valued." (p. 10).

Storr also cites evidence from someone involved with David Koresh who was a survivor of the FBI siege at Ranch Apocalypse, saying that:

"He told William Shaw that the months he spent at the ranch were the happiest days of his life. "We were one big family." He says. "We all believed in the one belief, and agreed on the same points. We were all one community." (p. 16).

Beyond this sociological explanation, I think that it is too simplistic to then blame the leaders of such groups solely for these destructive patterns of behaviour. The followers also, play a key part, which is not to deny their vulnerability, or to suggest that victims are responsible for and inevitably collude in their own victimisation. Storr (1997), again, makes some significant comments about the role of the followers. He says:

"This is a danger effecting all esoteric groups. Just as disciples reinforce a guru's belief in himself and his mission, so disciples reinforce each other's beliefs and allegiance. Esoteric groups become mutual reassurance systems, confirming each disciple's conviction that he or she has special insights as to how life should be lived which are denied to the ordinary person." (p. 121).

In the book already mentioned, 'The Scapegoat Complex', the author indicates the more active dimension of being a scapegoat by pointing out the characteristics of people who are likely to be scapegoated. This is shown in the personality dynamics and personal biographies, which can lead some people to carry the scapegoat role for a family, group or community.

Focussing on the relationship between the leaders and followers, and the overall social context of their interaction, rather than just making the leader culpable, or emphasising the gullibility, vulnerability and/or lack of strength of character of the 'disciples', gives a further dimension of understanding to the dynamics of these situations.

James Hillman (1975b), in a brilliant essay written in 1964, on the archetypal patterns of betrayal, points out that betrayal is necessary for the psyche to grow beyond the blissful but naive unquestioning security represented mythologically as existence in the Garden of Eden. He says;

"We are betrayed in the very same close relationships where primal trust is possible. We can be truly betrayed only where we truly trust – by brothers, lovers, wives, husbands, not by enemies, not by strangers. The greater the love and loyalty, the involvement and commitment, the greater the betrayal."

"For we must be clear that to live or love only where one can trust, where there is security and containment, where one cannot be hurt or let down, where what is pledged in words is forever binding, means really to be out of harm's way and so to be out of real life. And it does not matter what is this vessel of trust – analysis, marriage, church or law, any human relationship."

Hillman is arguing for the necessity, possibly the inevitability, of betrayal. Betrayal is a contemporary rite of passage. Those of us who looked for a certain and everlasting security of meaning and identity in the groups we helped create needed to have the carpet pulled up from under us.

Likewise I think it is too conveniently simplistic to label and explain all these phenomena as cults. Some people on hearing about my experience in 'The Community' suggest that I had joined a cult. One of the definitions of a cult in Webster's Third New International dictionary is "a usually small or narrow circle of persons united by devotion or allegiance to some artistic or intellectual, programme, tendency or figure". By this

definition I would have been a cult member but then this definition could include as cults my local film society, supporters of Plymouth Argyle football club etc etc.

Cults are generally defined and thought of as operating in a coercive manner. In his book, 'Combatting Cult Mind Control; Protection, Rescue and Recovery from Destructive Cults', (1988), Hassan says that;

"A destructive cult distinguishes itself from a normal social and religious group by subjecting its members to persuasion or other damaging influences to keep them in the group".

Hassan, in trying to differentiate further between 'destructive cults' and 'normal' social groups, goes on to identify ten distinguishing features of 'destructive cults', as follows;

- The doctrine of the group is taken to be reality; the theories and idea which are used to understand the world are taken to be a literal description of the world
 - Reality is reduced to basic polarities; good vs. bad, us vs. them
 - Members are made to feel special; to be part of a chosen community
 - The self must submit to the group; absolute obedience to authority is expected;
- Hassan says;

"Leaders of different cults have come up with strikingly similar tactics for fostering dependency. They transfer members frequently to new and strange locations, switch their work duties, promote them and then demote them on whims – all to keep them off balance. Another technique is to assign impossibly high goals, tell members that if they are "pure" they will succeed, and force them to confess impurity when they fail."

- New members are encouraged to model themselves on older members. Hassan says;"

One reason why a group of cultists may strike even a naïve outsider as spooky or weird is that everyone has similar odd mannerisms, clothing styles, and modes of speech. What the outsider is seeing is the personality of the leader passed down through several layers of modelling."

- Cults create a strong sense of community but happiness within this community is conditional and dependent on good performance
- Cult members are manipulated through fear and guilt; problems are always the fault of the individual cult member
- Life in a cult is an intense series of highs and lows; Hassan says;

"Life in a cult is a roller coaster ride. A member swings between the extreme happiness of experiencing the "truth" with an insider elite, and the crushing weight of guilt, fear and shame. Problems are always due to his inadequacies, not the group's. He perpetually feels guilty for not meeting standards."

- Cult members relationship to time is changed; the past is rewritten, the present is especially urgent and the future is a time of significant reward or punishment
- There is no legitimate way to leave the group and a belief that if people do leave terrible consequences will befall them.

Certainly some of this list rings true of 'The Community'. There was a definite sense of 'us' and 'them', of who was in the 'work' and who was not. I believed, with some justification, that our leader Simone had extraordinary powers and that I was part of a special grouping. For some of the time Simone was the leader of 'The Community' she was not receiving external supervision. There were very little checks and balances on the exercise of her power. Many of us thought she did not need supervision, and, besides, given her abilities, there was nobody capable of supervising her. There was a sense that difficulties with the way people experienced 'The Community' were due to the individual's 'negativity' rather than expressing a genuine criticism and unease with the set up. It seemed difficult to be in 'The Community' and also to participate in other therapies. Eventually people either left 'The Community' or parted from their other therapeutic involvements.

And yet 'The Community' was not a cult in the more usual sense that word has come to mean. Though Simone thought of her work as 're-parenting', we were not discouraged from contact with our families of origin as in some 'classic' cult settings. Many people had friends outside 'The Community', though many also as time went on, found their main friendships within 'The Community'. Neither did Simone encourage the kind of sexual license and experimentation that other groups favoured, and that some cult leaders endorsed or prescribed.

One difficulty with Hassan's list is that the dividing line between a 'destructive cult' and so-called 'normal' social behaviour is not so sharp. Looking at the list, it could equally read as a description of cabinet government under Margaret Thatcher – famous quotes from her include, "Is he one of us?" and "There is no such thing as society" - as of Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church. The list is also not so far removed from organisational cultures I have encountered or heard about anecdotally, such as 'The Mirror Group' under Robert Maxwell. In fact Hassan's quote about how leaders foster dependency sounds like the HR practices of some well-established global corporations.

The point I am keen to make here is that the dynamics of so called 'cults' are not so different in kind from the dynamics of ordinary social and organisational groups. It may be convenient to project all our craziness and destructiveness onto these cults whilst maintaining the comforting illusion that normal groups and organisations are free of such irrationality.

Concluding Reflections

As I write and conclude this piece I hear, in my mind's ear, Jack Whitehead, my PhD supervisor, asking what relevance it has to my contemporary professional practice.

Overall, my experience in 'The Community', as well as providing a long-term training in the method and theory of one particular school of psychotherapy as was intended, has, more importantly, led me to think deeply about the nature of the self, the dynamics of leadership and followership, the shaping and maintenance of group identity, the creation and development of organisational cultures, the nature of the unconscious in individuals, groups and organisations and the relationship between the individual and the social/cultural dimensions of life. As much of my current professional practice involves working with groups in an organisational setting, over short and long term time periods, these considerations are not insignificant.

The positive side of the training I did receive in 'the Community' has been to vastly increase my awareness of the emotional dimension of individual and group process and show me its power and importance.

In terms of my practice when I work with groups, I am now highly sensitised to processes of scape-goating and aim to do what I can to mitigate against this. I deliberately avoid setting myself up as or being cast into a 'guru' role. I am very cautious

about offering any one interpretation of a person or situation, which claims to be an exclusive or deeper truth - this has stimulated a keen interest in post-modernism. I am keen to help provide many perspectives for people from which to make sense of their experience.

I have also undergone a shift from the optimistic world-view of humanistic psychology and the associated enlightenment-based beliefs in progress, rationality and the human capacity to shape and control one's destiny (which is the basis of the dominant ego-centred psychology informing much current management and organisation development practice) to a greater appreciation of, and respect for, the many-sidedness of the human psyche in both its individual and collective manifestations.

Section four: working with 'my second twenty one years'

The above account was written between April 2001 and May 2002. It is the third version of the account and is unchanged from its final third formulation apart from adding date references to authors mentioned, and adding the third paragraph to the 'concluding reflections'. Having worked closely with the content for over a year, and due to its highly personal nature, I still find it difficult to stand back from the writing and assess it.

The intention of the writing is to follow Wright Mills (1959) recommendation, that:

"When biography and history are joined, when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have a relationship to and bearing on the content and ethos of a time, then self-study moves to research." (p. 15)

I also initially wanted to consciously use the writing as an opportunity to make sense of my experiences within 'the community', and to see if any kind of reconciliation with 'Simone' were possible. I therefore sent 'My second twenty one years' to Simone', with a covering letter dated 20th June 2001. In part of the letter, I said (the name of the organisation has been changed here to 'the community'):

"Throughout the last ten years I have had many thoughts about your letter and what happened in 'the Community'. I also imagine that you too have continued to think and reflect upon that time in our lives. When we last met – I guess it was about five years ago – I left thinking that you had not really deeply examined what

you were doing in sending me such a letter. There was no sense of remorse about it from you, that it might have been highly unethical, nor I thought any real acknowledgement from you of its potential for damage to me. Nor did I think there was any reflection from you – at least any that you were prepared to admit and share with me – about the potentially destructive effects of 'the Community'. I thought this effectively led to an impasse between us.

I still wonder about what view you now hold of this time – if your perspective has shifted at all - and whether there is any room at all for some kind of reconciliation between us. Part of my motivation in sending you this document is the possibility of opening up some genuine dialogue between us about what happened. I can also envisage the possibility that this document, which is the closest I have come to being able to articulate my thinking about 'the Community' and my involvement in it may lead you to decide not to engage further with me. Of course the document is not all encompassing or perfect – it is hard to do full justice to the intensity and complexity of that time in our lives."

In her registered letter back to me, dated 7th July 2001, Simone rebutted my account.

She said that:

"For the avoidance of doubt, I want to make it clear that your account is seriously deficient and I refute your interpretation of events. You attribute motivations and feelings to me that I know not to be true. Much of what you say in this account is a travesty of the things I was trying to teach."

She also made some specific points about the writing, and said that although I was not using their real names the main characters in the account were easily identifiable.

As a result of her letter, I amended the account and created a second version to take into account some of the points Simone had raised and remove all geographical references and other details that helped identify people. I regretted this somewhat because it went against the arguments I had been making in my research about the importance of context but thought it necessary to do. I sent her this second version, together with another covering letter, dated 1st November 2001. In the letter, I said:

"I think you make some valid points in referring to some of the omissions in my account. Some parts of my account, particularly my relationships with....., I have deliberately kept brief as I thought it would be an unwelcome intrusion on their

privacy to say more. I also think these relationships are less relevant to the overall theme in the writing which has emerged as an exploration of issues concerning leadership, groups and organisational culture, based on reflections on my own experience in 'the Community'.

I have now amended the account to include some of the points you raise because I think their inclusion gives a more rounded account. As I said in my earlier letter to you, no account can be exhaustive and will always be partial. If you want to add some comments alongside what I have written to give a more inclusive account I am willing to include them. I have also made greater effort to disguise peoples' identities by removing specific references to....."

Her response to this second letter was brief. In it, she said: "The picture you have presented is a distortion of the truth and I do not give you my permission for publication". (I had not asked her permission!). In addition, she stated: "I trust you have sought legal advice about defamation and the implications of the recently introduced Human Rights legislation."

My response to what I perceived as a threat of legal action was to seek legal advice about my account. To my surprise, I found that parts of it could indeed be seen as potentially defamatory. I had naively assumed that freedom of speech together with academic freedom meant that it was possible to write such accounts without fear of legal action. I thought long and hard about what to do. Should I go ahead and publish this account on my web-site and risk a legal action? Should I drop the idea of making this account public at all? What was my motivation in all this anyway and what was I trying to accomplish? Was I just motivated by a desire for revenge or was I concerned with redressing an injustice? Or was this desire to make the account public enormously narcissistic and inappropriately self-disclosing? Was it desirable anyway to make such an intimate account publicly available on a web-site?

Eventually, and after a number of conversations with friends, I decided to amend the account and create version three, which is the version in this thesis. This represents an attempt to take out or change what could be perceived as the parts of the account most at risk of being described as defamatory, without though overly diluting the thrust of what I wanted to say. I also decided to create a password-protected part of my web-site for both of my autobiographical writings as I realised that I did not want people viewing this material outside the context of any form of relationship with me. I was then able to

include the earlier unedited version of 'My first twenty-one years' on the site as I could restrict access to who saw it.

I have showed different versions of the account to friends, colleagues from a peer support group at work, and other people who were involved in 'the Community'.

I reproduce selected passages from their comments below, to offer further indication of the writing being a 'good read', and of the ability of my text to stimulate others' thinking.

From Andy Smith, a colleague at Roffey Park:

"I was gripped and found myself leafing through the pages to get to the end."

"Page 9 – Initial Reflections – This stuff had real resonance for me although I don't think my experiences of a 'community' have been as profound or long lasting at least. I think there is an archetype here."

From Suzanne Penn, also a colleague at Roffey Park:

"Thanks for the privilege of reading your work .

Like others you mention, your tale of 'The Community' reminds me of a number of personal examples of how a group like this operates. My dad is part of a religion (Christadelphian - interestingly the Church of England refer to it as a cult) which in my experience has exactly the same issues - some seem to have the power of 'excommunication' in an organisation that is supposed to be 'leaderless'. I even know of similar letters being written to the one you received by those in the centre of power. I found the paper personally very powerful - has led me down some trains of thought that I had not considered previously...."

From Steve Tarpey, another colleague at Roffey Park:

"I was interested, intrigued, at times downright fascinated by the narrative but I'm not sure how much detail is included to support the subsequent (equally fascinating) analysis, or as a form of catharsis for you. Neither rationale is 'wrong', but if it is the latter then it does raise questions about your purpose in making this a 'public document'."

From Geoff Mead, a co-member of my PhD supervision group:

"You write beautifully with real "narrative truth". The writing is direct and convincing and very evocative."

From Professor Petruska Clarkson:

"I read it immediately upon receipt and was very moved by your wise and reflective account. Thank you for sharing it with me..... I'm very happy that your writing is progressing so well; you write logically, informatively, clearly and with feeling."

From Jonathon Kemp who I met at the workshop referred to in the text held in the Borders area:

"Thank you for your letter of explanation and the interesting account of your personal journey

"It was striking, and to a certain extent reassuring, to hear that what I (we) had experienced in our own 'cult' situation was not unique. Obviously it is also in the very nature of cults that they foster a sense of exclusivity and elitism, as if one is part of the chosen few that hold a very special truth that sets one apart from the 'outside' world....."

From Val Hammond, the chief executive at Roffey Park:

"Immediately engaging as usual causing reflections and insights. I wondered for example about whether there is a link between the desire 'to do good/bring about change' and the propensity for involvement with cult-like organisations. This came because your story reminded me of Is there a link, does one lead onto the other or is it just a coincidence?"

".....The references to wider society, eg political references and to the cults elsewhere help to set your experiences in a context and I think the interplay of different 'tribes' might be worth exploring more - the anthropological approach I suppose.

It is good to see increasing references to emerging philosophical and scientific thought at the end and some sense of where you are going. In a way I feel I am reading a book - or a life - as published as a part series which is rather odd and yet it is like life. Some of this 'hanging in space' will disappear when you have completed it as even something as simple as an index provides a framework and I can't at the moment decide if it is of consequence. except to say its a good read!

More feedback, Jane had one word for it 'riveting' (I hope you are OK about her reading your paper as she reads everything that comes to me unless it is marked otherwise.)"

I am offering excerpts here as further evidence of the way that the evolving practice of showing my work to others has generated learning and further insight. Such learning does not happen independently of my relationships with others. Learning and the change in relationships occur together. For example, the risk of showing my chief executive the different autobiographical accounts I have been writing for inclusion on my web-site, and her thoughtful responses to them, have helped bring about, I believe, an increasingly trusting and respectful relationship between us.

Section five: postscript

This chapter has given expression to my 'personal autobiographical voice' through two accounts of different stages of my life. In these accounts I have wanted to demonstrate the value of a form of representation and knowledge making different from traditional propositional knowledge. This form is highly subjective and cast in a narrative mould. It is, to refer back to the arguments of section seven of chapter three, an illustration of the self re-creating itself through story or fiction and using the genre of autoethnography in which to accomplish this.

My aim for the reader is that it should be an 'evocative narrative' as described by Ellis & Bochner (2000).

"The usefulness of these stories is their capacity to inspire conversation from the point of view of the readers, who enter from the perspective of their own lives. The narrative rises or falls on its capacity to provoke readers to broaden their horizons, reflect critically on their own experience, enter empathetically into worlds

of experience different from their own, and actively engage in dialogue regarding the social and moral implications of the different perspectives and standpoints they encounter.” (p. 748).

The responses quoted in sections two and four, together with other conversations generated by these accounts, encourage me that I have achieved this.

Chapter Six

Linkages and Contrasts

I wrote the account of ideas of the self in chapter three in an almost exclusively propositional form. Although emphasising story in section seven of chapter three, and multiplicity in section five, the form of writing is in the traditional, singular, uni-vocal, impersonal, academic mode, appropriately 'sandbagged' with references. Occasionally another voice briefly interrupts and makes an aside (e.g. the comment on Osama Bin Laden on page 80). This is the same critical/cynical voice presented in chapter four. But my overall 'scholarly voice' in chapter three is primarily disengaged, abstract and theoretical - what Shotter (1999) refers to as a "monological-retrospective-objective style of writing (or aboutness-writing for short)."

It is interesting to contrast this with the two sections of autobiographical writing in chapter five. Here the style and overall genre can be described as personal-confessional. I had not appreciated until after writing the autobiographical sections in chapter five and creating the material in chapter three that many critics view the dominant contemporary literary mode as confessional. And this mode is not without its detractors. Bleakley (2000), an important and incisive critic of this mode in chapter three, identifies the "primary voice" of the Enlightenment-based, unified 'I' as the personal confessional genre and further claims that "the secular humanistic, personal-confessional mode reifies, literalises, or concretises the 'I'". He argues that personal narratives need to see the self as a social construction, formed in relation and response to others, not just the act of an independent self, striving for authenticity and autonomy. He quotes approvingly Smith's (1995) work on autobiography. Smith says the tendency when autobiography, becomes primarily expressed in the confessional genre, through being, in Bleakley's words, "larded with pathos", is that: "Both one's history and one's personality are exactly that – one's own – and one nurtures them like a sublime commodity with all the narcissistic gratification that implies." Both Bleakley and Smith use the work of Derrida to argue that autobiography, though appearing as self-confession and self-revelation is, in fact, a means by which relationship to an other is created. This is certainly the case with my own autobiographical writing. The key relationship that the writing of the first twenty-one years of my life is aimed at is my parents. And the key relationship that the second piece of autobiographical writing is geared to is 'Simone', the leader of 'the Community'.

And the practice involved in the autobiographical writing was further aimed at eliciting response and relationship from those 'others'.

Lasch (1979), likewise, is very critical of most confessional writing. He sees it dominated by self indulgence rather than self insight, full of psychiatric cliches, and grabbing attention through increasingly sensationalist self revelation and the recording of 'undigested' experiences without further critical reflective detachment. Such writings are for Lasch further evidence of a predominantly narcissistic culture. He does not, however, entirely dismiss the confessional mode and is able to see possibilities in its form, though he thinks this is realised by precious few writers. He says:

"But the best work in this vein attempts, precisely through self-disclosure, to achieve a critical distance from the self and to gain insight into the historical forces, reproduced in psychological form, that have made the very concept of selfhood increasingly problematic." (p. 17).

In response to both Bleakley and Lasch's trenchant critiques of the confessional autobiographical mode, and to refer forward to the criteria at the end of chapter nine, I aim to indicate the fragile, problematic, socially constructed nature of self-hood and to illustrate the influences shaping my identity. I aim to situate my personal autobiography of the first twenty-one years of my life in the social context of growing up in suburban London in the late fifties, sixties and early seventies. I also aim to tell the story of my involvement with 'The Community' not just from a personal perspective and hopefully not over "larded with pathos" but also to reflect upon the prevalence of similar stories as symptomatic of certain social milieus of the seventies and eighties. In chapter three, I then deal with the theme of the problematic, socially constructed, storied nature of the self from a theoretical, propositional, perspective not a personal confessional one.

The discerning reader will also note that the theoretical stories told about the self are not unrelated to the personal autobiographical narratives in chapter five. Informing the theoretical perspectives advanced in chapter three are the experiences described in the autobiographical writing. The 'scholarly voice' draws on and listens to the 'personal autobiographical voice'. I am not meaning to advocate a simple crude one-to-one correspondence between the theories of the self in chapter three and my personal autobiography, but rather suggest and tease out the complex intertwining and patterning of ideas and experience. In this way, I am seeking to contextualise the ideas in chapter three in my personal history, but not reduce them in any kind of causal way or through

'cod-psychological' theorising to issues of personal biography. Furthermore, the influence is not simply one-way from biography to ideas. The 'personal autobiographical voice' of chapter five is likewise informed by and listens to the 'scholarly voice'. One of the key factors in extricating myself from 'the community' was to use the critical faculties of my 'scholarly voice' and the writing in section three of chapter five shows the influence of the 'scholarly voice' in sifting over and giving meaning to my experience.

Three of the more immediate connections that I make between chapters three and five are briefly outlined below. I hope the texts are 'messy' enough to suggest other connections to the reader, allowing multiple interpretations of the interweaving of the theoretical story and the personal story, or, in Heron's (1992) terms, of the interconnections between propositional and experiential knowing.

Firstly, the critique of the dominant Cartesian view of the self and the associated narrow states of consciousness endorsed by the Newtonian-Cartesian worldview is informed by my experiences with LSD and also by my encounters with the natural world as alive, meaningful and interconnected with the human world. Likewise my profoundly disorienting experiences with LSD are now usefully informed by reading authors such as Christopher Bache (2000).

Secondly, the theoretical critique of humanistic psychology's positing of a singular, authentic, 'deep' or 'real' self is linked to my experience of ten years training in a body-based therapy striving after such a self and my experiences of the dynamics and culture of the group of people involved in that training. This experience really brought alive the significance of the kinds of stories that can be told to construct selfhood and explain motivation. The experience of 'the Community' showed, too, the power of groups in shaping and maintaining the identity of their individual members through the construction of stories, which reinforce a particular view of the world and of individuals' places in that world.

Thirdly, in chapter three, I describe, at a distance, the kinds of narratives elaborated by Frank (1995) to make sense of illness. Frank's thinking became so vividly relevant and meaningful to me because of my experience of the profound depression and 'chaos narrative' occasioned by the break-up of my second marriage, which I recorded in my journal at the time. His description of the 'chaos narrative' was very helpful to me in being able to further understand the nature of the experience I had been through.

The ideas in chapter three and my life experience are connected in other ways, too. Many of the people whose ideas have significantly influenced me and who I refer to in chapter three are people I know and have worked with. I was extensively involved with Ralph Stacey through the Complexity and Management Centre at the University of Hertfordshire between 1993 -1997. Patricia Shaw, Visiting Professor at the same Complexity and Management Centre and colleague and co-author of Ralph Stacey, is my second ex-wife and thereby also 'Anna' in chapter five.

I have met and talked with a number of authors referred to in this text at Schumacher College, through the context of my work as a facilitator on their courses. These people, in particular, James Hillman, are not simply the disembodied ideas and bibliographical references, which appear in my text, but living beings encountered, which has led to a rich storehouse of memories and tales. The real life presence and my personal encounters with Paul Ekins, Paul Hawken, Karl-Henrik Robert, Hazel Henderson, Amory Lovins, Wolfgang Sachs, Jonathon Porritt, Fritjof Capra, Thomas Moore and James Hillman have brought colour, life, particularity, story and personal meaning to the ideas I have tried to articulate in chapter three and elsewhere. In James Hillman's case, for example, his ideas are forever associated with the grace and good humour by which he accepted my younger son being sick on his shoes as a result of my son's first experience of teenage drunkenness at Schumacher College.

At this point I want to return to the challenge posed by Jack Whitehead's comments on my writing about ideas of the self which is referred to at the end of chapter three. To repeat this here:

"I'll be fascinated to hear if it does help you to move onto being able to say what is important to you in your practice (as educator). Let's check out the validity of my thinking that it won't help you at all! I reckon that a move onto being able to say what is important to you in your practice as an educator will require a creative break with your propositional (mind) into a different epistemological and ontological relationship with your bodymind."

Part of my response to this challenge is contained in this chapter already, and questions the dualistic division Jack makes between 'propositional mind' and 'bodymind'. That is, I have, in the previous section, tried to show that the thinking expressed in my 'propositional mind' (in chapter three) is not entirely separate from the lived experiences of my 'bodymind'.

But to return to the nub of Jack's question. Does the writing in chapter three help me articulate what is important to me in my practice as an educator? I will not answer this immediately but will return to this question though discussing and writing about two different but related dimensions of my practice. In writing about my practice in the next part of the thesis, I will introduce a further voice into this thesis – the 'reflexive narrative voice of practice'.

Chapter seven will focus on my practice as an educator in the context of being a Programme Director and Set Adviser for the two-year part-time postgraduate programme in People and Organisational Development at Roffey Park.

Chapter eight will examine my practice as an organisational change consultant and particularly focus on the inquiry question that emerged after my MPhil transfer paper, namely; *'How can I work more effectively with self-organising processes in groups to enable individual and organisational learning?'*

Part Three

Chapter Seven

Creating a 'living educational theory'

How can we reflect on the practice of say, 'student-centred learning' in a way that captures its fundamentally subversive, unpredictable and, as it were, 'erotic' quality rather than representing it merely as a form of technical accomplishment?" (p. 78)

Rowland (2000)

Section one: four vignettes

One

It is about 6.30pm on Tuesday 12th November 2002. I am sitting in a large upstairs training room at Roffey Park Management Institute near Gatwick meeting with five female participants who are students from the tenth intake of the People and Organisational Development post-graduate programme at Roffey Park.

At one end of the room on four large sheets of white paper pinned to the wall is an ad hoc collection of pictures and representations of bridges that the fourteen participants present that morning have been asked to bring with them to the third residential event. The theme of the residential is 'Bridges and Connections.' Overall, at this stage, there are still technically eighteen participants on the programme, though the actual numbers of participants that day are in question. One participant did not arrive until lunchtime because of a major accident on the M23, which had delayed the start of the event. One person is unable to attend the residential at all as she is due to give birth imminently. One person is leaving the course that day as she has been offered a new job in Thailand. One person has newly joined this group today having deferred from the previous year's programme. Another person is not able to attend the residential until the following day. And yet another is planning to leave the programme at the end of the residential. So a sense of changing and potentially uncertain membership is present.

Just in front of the collection of bridges at the west end of the room is a large semi-circular, meccano-like, metallic structure, normally part of an exhibition stand, but today

having been used in an afternoon's workshop as a screen to create both a stage and back-stage area. In this area, people had been invited to explore the course assessment process in a different medium by appearing from behind the stage speaking about a silly object they had been asked to bring which they first were criticised for and then, on making a spontaneous change to what they said about the object, were accepted for. At the other end of the room, eight pieces of large flip chart paper are clumsily joined together on the wall extending onto the ceiling, showing the messy diagram that participants had created that morning to map out the interconnections between the work that they are each doing in the next fifteen months. This work will create an overall portfolio for the MSc for each participant and is based on individual development agreements that they have very recently drawn up. In the middle of the room, close to the small circle of chairs that comprise our meeting space, is a vase of white lilies that I bought at the (particularly good) local florists that morning, following Thomas Moore's (1992) precepts of bringing a Venusian quality into a room. Dotted around the room are photographs and artistic portrayals of various famous bridges downloaded from the internet by one of the people in the design team. On another wall are two flip charts detailing possible options including badminton, massage, and the cinema for the Thursday evening entitled 'The Great Escape'. In the front of the room are the traditional props and paraphernalia of a training institution – flipcharts, CD player, overhead projector, boxes of felt-tip pens, blue-tack, post-it notes. The room is spacious, an unusual slightly dog-legged shape capable of sitting over forty people in the large comfortable chairs we are now seated in.

The five female participants meeting with me are the design group for this four-day residential. We have had two morning meetings, a conference telephone call, and various email exchanges in the previous two months leading up to this residential event which is positioned as the third residential, ten months into a two-year programme. Prior to our meeting now, after the first day on the residential, the complete course group spent one hour in the smaller room next door talking about how we might continue to work together as a 'community of practice'.

We are meeting at the end of the day to review how the day has gone and to discuss any issues arising from the day that might need our attention. From my perspective the previous course meeting has gone relatively well. My colleague, Diane, who is both a co-set adviser with me in one of the three learning sets that the course is divided into, and also the recently appointed Director for the MSc course at Roffey as a whole, facilitated the meeting with me. The other two set advisers were not present. Originally two of

the design team who were responsible for organising the afternoon's workshop with an external contributor were to have facilitated the course meeting with me but they felt they wanted to be freer to participate in the meeting without the responsibility of facilitating it. Hence, I asked Diane to co-facilitate the meeting. In facilitating the meeting, we had followed a typical format of asking people to initially form three groups that mixed up the membership of the three different learning sets to talk together about how to continue to work together as a 'community of practice', and to then use their exploration in smaller groups as a stimulus for further discussion in the complete course group. Part of the purpose of this meeting, too, was to consider whether to change the composition of the three learning sets. The membership of these sets had been decided by the participants in an activity on the first residential ten months previous. This self-determining activity, as often happens, had been painful and difficult at times as participants faced, or avoided, issues of inclusion, exclusion, personal risk and exposure. The discussion about potentially reconstituting the sets now had added weight and meaning because two people leaving the programme were from one set and another member of the same set was due to have a baby. The general sense from discussions held earlier in each of the separate learning sets was that participants did not want to change the membership of these groups because they felt they had now built sufficient depth of knowledge of one another to enable fruitful working together for the next fifteen months. Whilst the three groups met for twenty minutes, I talked with Diane about our views of changing set membership. Our general view was that there seemed no merit in changing composition of the sets if the participants did not want to, and that the arguments for not changing outweighed the arguments for change. We did, though, think it would be useful for the participants to consider changing set advisers. Part of my thinking behind this was a comment made by a previous external examiner that the different sets on the programme develop, as all groups do, their own distinctive culture, and that in examining work, he could tell which of the sets the different pieces of work belonged too. I had wondered about the influence that the style of the set adviser inevitably has on the set and had already noticed patterns of interest evolving in one set that reflected the interests and expertise of their set adviser.

When the different groups reconvened to take their discussion further – I deliberately avoided a formal report back from each of these groups as I wanted to encourage a more conversational and dialogical interaction – a number of original ideas surfaced about how to work together across sets, whilst keeping the same set composition. These ideas included people assessing others' work whom were not members of their set, and visiting other set meetings for part or all of the time. I liked these ideas because

they were creative responses to the challenge of working in depth in a small group but also allowing access to a wider network of ideas and resources. As the discussion evolved there seemed to be no reference to any possible changes in set composition. I pointed this out and asked if the set whose membership had been depleted were comfortable to continue as a group of four, with the additional uncertainty of another of their members about to give birth. They were keen to continue as a group. At this point the person who had newly joined the group, and who had been located in another set which she had already met, offered to change membership to the depleted set to help even out the numbers of people in each set. One woman in the set she was already in commented that her move could be helpful as she wanted to undertake sensitive and possibly revealing work about her organisation and she was concerned that the new person was from a competitor company. At the same time, though, the set that the new person wanted to join contained (as the member about to give birth) someone from the same organisation as herself. Her offer to change sets was acknowledged but could not be resolved at the meeting. I then introduced the possibility of changing set advisers. Most people did not want to do this but one participant was vocal in her support for the idea. Also, in my recollection, near this point in the meeting the person who had newly joined the course expressed her frustration and criticised Roffey Park about needlessly, as she saw it, going through and repeating the same issues of changing set membership she had witnessed on her programme the previous year.

I have indicated at some length the circumstances of this meeting to offer some immediate context for the meeting of the design group that I began this account with, and to give some understanding of the complexity of the course dynamics. Much of the initial part of the meeting is taken up with considering how to integrate the person who has recently joined the course group. At 6.30 p.m., conscious that dinner is scheduled for 6.45 p.m., aware that there are a number of unresolved issues from the earlier meeting, and feeling somewhat tired from the day and a lack of sleep two nights before, I start to jot down on a flip chart, whilst the discussion continues, a list of currently outstanding issues. The first of these is about the question of set advisers changing sets. The remainder are the different suggestions that had arisen in the meeting about new ways of working across sets. I think it is important to address these issues before the end of the meeting. I therefore stand up by the flip chart and begin by saying that in relation to the question of set advisers changing sets I will discuss this with the two other set advisers and, as Programme Director, I will make the final decision about that. Expecting that this will not be problematic, I get ready to move to the next item on the list I have created. Immediately, one of the design team challenges me about moving on

so quickly and says she wants to talk more about what I have just said. Other people come into the conversation saying that they are surprised and perplexed that I am taking on this decision and unhappy with the way I am doing this now. They comment that the sets were set up to give them responsibility as a group for choosing their membership, so why am I now taking away this responsibility? In addition, one person says that she understands my role and authority as programme director to take action if the course was *not* working and there were serious problems to be addressed. She believes that the general view is that people are satisfied overall with the development of the programme and that she has not heard me express any concerns that there are major issues, which need to be tackled.

This is a key moment for me on the residential. In retrospect, writing and thinking about it now, it is an example of a 'critical incident' (Schein, 1985) in any group when the authority of the leaders is directly challenged. Such moments have powerfully shaping influences on the culture of any group. I am surprised by the strength of reaction to my proposal. Also I am immediately reminded of an incident in the first residential when I had publicly, clumsily, crudely, and unilaterally exerted my authority on one of my colleagues. I have mixed feelings. Part of me thinks simply and primitively that: "I am the Programme Director and I will decide and you will do what I say". On the other hand I am swayed by the arguments that are being used to challenge me. I note that the challenge whilst robust actually feels constructive. I also begin to realise that this challenge indicates a real sense of ownership of and commitment to the course rather than a means of usurping my personal authority. I also note in myself the contradiction between an espoused and genuinely held personal view about the value of building collaborative working relationships with participants, and my opposite behaviour in this instance. I therefore rescind my previous statement. I say that I will of course speak with my colleagues about what has happened but I will not then make a final decision about this. By now it is past the time for dinner so we head off to the dining room.

Later that evening, the following question occurs to me: "If I am not to decide about changing set advisers, then who will decide and how will we decide?" I resolve to share this question with the design group when we next meet.

Two

It is 7.55 p.m. the following evening, Wednesday the 13th of November 2002.

I have just met with one of the people in my learning set to talk about his development agreement. I have then joined up with a group of participants in the bar at Roffey and then walk to the private dining room where we are to eat that night in the company of two other men on the programme. We are slightly late for dinner. All the other participants are present in the room.

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The room is beautifully decorated. People have been asked to bring along an eastern cushion and any eastern objects to the residential, which have transformed a comfortable but bland training room into a delightful, colourful evocation of the orient. Attractive costumes and textiles hang on the walls. Candles float in bowls of water. People sit on the floor on bright cushions and in chairs draped with fabric. A marvellous long Indian cloth structure hangs from the centre of the room. A CD of Moroccan music, 'The Voice of the Atlas', plays. An interest in eastern thought and its relevance to personal development has been a theme of this programme from the first residential. The food is delicious. I have, in advance, spoken with the chefs at Roffey about the kind of food we want for that evening and they have responded inventively and with care.

There is a low hubbub of engaged conversation in the room. People are talking animatedly in twos, threes and fours. The atmosphere feels friendly, warm, intimate and inviting. In part of my mind, I log the thought that the creation of such an atmosphere is a good example of a self-organising process. Although there was direction to bring material for an 'eastern evening' the actual creation of the environment has happened spontaneously, very rapidly, and in a highly co-operative fashion in about one hour with no obvious leader. For most of this time I was not in the room where the decoration was happening. The creation of such an evening together is a key indicator to me that the programme is going well, as much as the rich quality of the discussion on the programme, or of the calibre of any outside contributors.

Three

I am having lunch on Thursday that same week at one end of a large table in the dining room with the three workshop leaders from 'Theatre of the Mind'. They are due to run the next session on the programme. I have arranged to talk with them together with the member of the design group who is responsible for briefing and liaising with them. She

and I sit on either side of the three workshop leaders. In addition, another member of the design team sits on my left. We begin talking to the workshop leaders about the themes that have arisen from the mapping of development agreements that we want them to work with. The member of the design team on my left joins the conversation and participates vigorously. I notice a very slight affronted reaction in myself that it is not her role to do this. I counter this reaction with the more pleasing thought that this is a further example of a participant taking on naturally and spontaneously a leadership role on the programme.

Four

The workshop leaders from 'Theatre of the Mind' are working with us using a variety of games and activities from the theatre. One of them is called 'Carnival in Rio'. The group stands in a large circle and someone peels off from the circle, walks around facing the other members in the circle and makes a noise and action they have to copy. As they go around the circle training everyone in their particular sound and movement, the next person peels away and makes a different sound and movement that is then mimicked by the people they encounter. As this continues a rich cacophony of sounds and movements are built up. As this exercise is progressing, and after everybody has had one turn around the circle, an idea pops into my mind of what sound and movement I want to introduce to others. I peel away from my place in the circle and say to individuals loudly and angrily, "Shut the f**k up". This exact phrasing of words has been influenced by seeing again the short clip I used from 'Pulp Fiction' the previous day in a session on postmodern thought. I walk around the circle saying this to people in sequence and hearing them play it back to me. In the background the other sounds that are being generated continue. My final encounter is with a participant who refuses to copy my sound and movement and continues asserting the movement and sound she is already doing. I try three times to convert her to my movement but each time she responds more vigorously and assertively with her own sound and gesture. At this point, the workshop leaders conclude the activity for a tea break. I have found the experience of doing this liberating and wonderfully exhilarating. But the questions do occur to me as I take a cup of water with a few participants by the water-cooler: "Is my behaviour appropriate? Is it professional?"

Section two: self-managed learning

These four vignettes, written on 18 & 19 November 2002, describe moments that stood out as significant, which occurred during a four-day residential event of a postgraduate course from 12-16 November 2002 at Roffey Park.

This two-year part-time postgraduate course in People and Organisational Development has been a focus of my sustained research inquiries over the last three years with four different programme groups and across the range of different roles I have occupied in relation to these groups.

To understand the organisational and pedagogical context in which my inquiries are situated throughout this chapter, it is worth briefly describing the history and nature of the programme at Roffey Park, and locating it within certain educational philosophies and traditions.

An MSc in Management Development, as the programme was first named, was set up at Roffey Park by a group of staff, including myself, between 1991-93. The first intake of students (MSc 1), with whom I worked as a set adviser, was in January 1993. Salford University, who offer a similar programme, validate the course.

At an early point on the programme, the students divide themselves into learning sets of 5-6 participants with a staff member as a set adviser. Typically membership of these learning sets, apart from people leaving the programme, remains the same throughout the two years, though revisiting the set configuration, and exploring whether to change composition, generally happens about nine months into the programme (as described in vignette one).

The programme is based on the educational philosophy of self-managed learning (SML). Ian Cunningham, who was chief executive at Roffey Park between 1987 and 1992, claims to have originated this term. Self-managed learning is defined on a handout from Roffey Park as “an approach where individuals work out what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.”

As an approach to learning it is based on values of autonomy, responsibility, self-control, and choice (Cunningham, 1994). Intrinsic to the approach is a holistic view of the person, which emphasises the role of emotion as well as intellect and cognition in learning. In his book on ‘The Wisdom of Strategic Learning’, Cunningham (1994) quotes

approvingly a remark by Mike Dixon a journalist on the Financial Times that, “thinking is embedded in feeling” (p. 98). One of the aims of SML is to acknowledge and work with the emotional as well as the cognitive dimension of learning.

SML draws from and integrates a number of different traditions in education and management development. These include the ideas and work of Reg Revans (1980, 1983) who pioneered the use and philosophy of ‘action learning’ groups in developing managers. Revans’ approach was radical at the time as he linked theory and practice by connecting the learning and development of managers to their day-to-day work and important organisational projects they were engaged in. One of Revans (1983) much quoted aphorisms is; “There can be no learning without action and no action without learning”. Other important traditions influencing SML include learner-centred and self-directed approaches to adult education, particularly based on the work of Rogers (1969); ideas and practices of experiential learning developed from the educational philosophy of Kolb (1984); the intensive group-based approaches (encounter groups and T-groups) arising from the personal growth and development movements inspired by humanistic psychology in the 1960’s and 1970’s; self-development groups (Pedler, Burgoyne, Boydell, 1978) in management education; Knowles’ (1986) work on adult learning and learning contracts; and open and distance learning.

Similar traditions of experiential learning, learner-centred approaches to education, and intensive psychotherapeutic group-based approaches were also at the roots of the diploma course I refer to in my autobiographical writings in section two of chapter five, which has been so influential in my own development and thinking about education. This diploma course has always inspired me and it has been a consistent intention of mine to try and create a similar learning climate on the MSc programmes at Roffey Park I have been involved with. It’s worth quoting my own words from section two of chapter four about the diploma course I followed to show again its vitality, and contrast with the traditional education I had received up until that point.

“The course was a crucible in which psychology, psychotherapy, politics, spirituality, feminism, artistic expression, and personal development met and mingled, not in a theoretical way, but through the lived interaction of the people involved. There was a wild, mould-breaking aspect to the course.....

.....The course was an initiation to a life-long journey of, for want of a better word, personal development and exploration of the relationship between

individuals, groups and organisation. It showed that learning could be involving, absorbing, personal, political, risky and exhilarating compared to the abstract, mainly detached theorising I had encountered at Cambridge."

One of the more distinctive features of SML is the choice it gives participants to define their own syllabus, and areas of study and inquiry. On the MSc programme at Roffey Park, students have to engage in three defined pieces of work in their first nine months of the programme. These include a 'position paper' addressing the question: "*What has shaped and affected me in the way that I now work to develop people and organisations?*" They also include a 'critical review' of the field of people and organisational development, which requires participants to "*offer a perspective or framing on the field of people and organisational development*", and a 'development agreement' whose purpose is to "*set out a portfolio of work that will be completed by the end of year two which will be assessed for the award of the MSc*". (All italicised quotes above are from the current programme handbook.)

In the first vignette presented at the beginning of this chapter, the development agreement is referred to in the text a number of times, as that particular MSc course is at the stage of the programme of drawing up development agreements which determine the work they will be engaged in for the remaining fifteen months of the programme. This is, therefore, an important document as participants, within broad constraints, determine areas of study and development that are interesting, relevant, meaningful and challenging both to themselves and their respective organisations, and which also have to meet the standards of a masters programme.

A further distinctive feature of the MSc programme is that participants engage in self-assessment. Each piece of work they produce has to be assessed by all the members, including the set adviser, of the learning set they are a part of. This requires set members to engage in the task of formulating and determining for themselves, with the assistance of the set adviser, the criteria for Masters standard and then assessing each other's work against those criteria. This is, intellectually and emotionally, a challenging process, as it requires students to be making pass and failure judgements on their peers.

Having briefly outlined some of the institutional and educational background to this programme, I will now go on to describe and critically evaluate the processes of inquiry I have been engaged in whilst working on the programme.

Section three: self-study inquiry

On further reflection, I can see - without it being my original starting point or conscious intention to do so - that all the vignettes described at the beginning of this chapter portray aspects of my educational leadership role during the third residential event of the tenth intake on the MSc in People and Organisational Development. They all critically involve key issues of power and authority.

This particular programme began in January 2002. As I have engaged in the course, and followed my inquiry practice of writing about aspects of the programme, particularly following the residential events, and sending these accounts to the participants on the programme, a key inquiry question has surfaced more clearly and pressingly over the past nine months. This is - how do I use the authority of my roles as overall Programme Director, and as Set Adviser to one of the three learning sets on the programme, to build genuinely collaborative working relationships? A supplementary and related question is - how much real co-creation is possible on a programme which is set within the academic, institutional framework, formal power relationships, and constraints of a Masters degree? A third related and important question is - how do I make the activity itself of inquiring into these two earlier questions part of the process of building the collaboration and co-creation I want to happen?

To begin with the third question from the paragraph above. When I started as Programme Director for MSc 10, I already had experienced over three years of working with other MSc groups and involving them in different inquiry questions. These questions, as indicated in chapter one, have continuously evolved over the course of my PhD. From this experience, I had come to better appreciate that my inquiry questions and the interests and agenda of MSc participants could be quite divergent. I needed to overcome my narcissistic tendencies that people on the MSc would naturally and inevitably be interested in what I was up to and find it endlessly fascinating. The challenge, therefore, as I began MSc 10, was to find a way of genuinely engaging the participants in my inquiries in a way that they experienced as relevant, interesting and appropriate to them, and which added to their and my learning. In short, I wanted to set up a situation in which I was researching *with* people not *on* them (Heron and Reason, 2001).

I believe that the benefits of, and rationale for, conducting a self-study inquiry into my own practice on a two year programme in People and Organisational Development and sharing this inquiry with participants on the programme are clear and cogent. Using

Peter Reason and Judi Marshall's framework (1987), the benefit for 'me' is in reflecting on and improving my practice. For 'us', the course participants and myself, the benefits are in tracing and learning from the connections and overlaps between my roles as programme director and set adviser on the programme in helping to develop the participants, and participants roles in their respective organisations, which are likewise focussed on individual and organisational development. In other words, participants can learn from their experience of working with me in an educational leadership role on the programme about their own similar roles in their organisations. This experiential, often highly emotional learning from undergoing the processes of self and community development, what Rowland (2000) refers to as the knowledge generated from the 'shared context', is a vital and significant aspect of the programme. For 'them', that is the people reading this account in my thesis, the benefits are the potential insights and learning generated for you as you engage in this narrative.

I was not, though, aiming to set up a form of co-operative inquiry (Heron and Reason, 2001) in which, typically, people share an agreed similar underlying inquiry question, and also where formal authority relations do not exist. I was, though, aiming, to use the highly apt choice of wording coined by DeLong (2002), to set my inquiries "alongside" the interests and inquiries of the participants on the programme. I also understood that the process of building interest in my inquiries from the participants and indicating their relevance to them would progress over time, especially as my relationships with them developed. This illustrates further the point I have been emphasising throughout this thesis about the contextual, relationship-dependent nature of learning and knowledge creation.

Having outlined the inquiry questions at the beginning of this section which both underlie and arise from the vignettes, I now want to trace back these inquiry questions and relate their evolution to earlier forms of inquiry practice with other MSc groups.

Section four: beginning inquiry

My inquiry process with regard to MSc groups formally began in February 2000. I had been discussing with my supervisor, Jack Whitehead, the nature of any evidence required in order to show the educational influence I was having on my students. At the time, I objected to what I perceived as the linear, causal explanation I thought inherent in Jack Whitehead's concern with the educator tracking and evaluating their influence with their students in order to improve their practice.

As a result of our arguments, I decided to talk with the learning set on the MSc 6 programme I had been working with over a two-year period to inquire into their perspective on the nature of my educational influence on them. This conversation took place on the last hour of our final meeting together on 18 February 2000. I intended, too, that this conversation, as well as being of direct benefit to me, by exploring over the period of the programme what the students had learned and my role in their learning, might also help them with the process of concluding the programme satisfactorily. I taped, then transcribed the conversation, and sent the transcript to the four students with some additional comments triggered by reading the transcript. Re-reading the transcript now, three significant themes emerge from the conversation. (The full transcript is on my web-site, www.minotaursegg.co.uk).

First, many of the comments that people made are highly personally affirming. I'm still touched and delighted by some of the remarks. As examples, four selected quotes, one from each person present, which touch on vital aspects of facilitative practice, are:

".....what impact your behaviour has had on us as someone who for me has modelled the role as developer because we have had most frequent contact with you through the set system, as it were, and I found myself thinking about a number of issues and I think it goes something like this that in my paper I wrote and I am still thinking about this - how does somebody manage a space in such a way that it is full of possibilities so unbounded, if you like, and yet how do they manage it with boundaries so that it feels safe because learning for me has been a lot to do with taking risks and experimenting and that's where I feel that the learning has occurred and I don't know quite how you do it, but I think it is something to do with having a repertoire of skills to be able to draw upon and a sensitivity to know when boundaries are important and when freedom is important and being able to draw across a range of things so that that space has felt, both of those things for me at different times when I have needed it to be bounded it has been bounded and when I have needed it to be limitless and liberating"

".....but there are two times that have just sprung to my mind as we have been talking where you have taken completely different positions, both of which have been important at the time and I think have shown flexibility in the way that you have worked with us. The first was this issue that we had over the equity of assessment because that was a difficult issue, I think it was around the development agreements, when my development agreement didn't pass and in the same Set Meeting, Mike's did and then we had, and then there was a discussion

around whether or not we were using equivalent criteria. And at the time for me, that could have been more difficult than it was made so I think that it was handled effectively but also that you realised that there was something wrong, that you didn't dig your heels in, that you went away and thought about it, and came back and also felt uncomfortable with what we had experienced, and re-addressed it and it would have been easy for you to have taken a firmer position which would have been, I think, inappropriate, but you could have said, look, this is how it is, I am the Set Adviser, and that is how I say, and you didn't, you went away, you re-thought your own position and you reflected on what had happened and you took a different position and we all learned from that, you learned from it but we all learned from it as well, and I think that that showed greater integrity for me in facilitating us through that than had you have pulled rank or used your position."

".....because I have thought about the interaction and how you influence the Set, not how you run it, because I never feel that you run it, I wrote down here that you always seem to be part of it, it's never that your voice is more important and you're just talking and giving your feelings and in a very honest way, but the thing which I really think well OK which has been a strength for you for me, for me personally, is the commitment you have demonstrated but its about this commitment and it's a kindness but I think you have to be generous with spirit to take the time to do things we're busy people - generous with spirit - generosity of spirit."

"..... it's the fact that you don't try and push your knowledge on us, but it's sort of here it is and if you're interested, then I'm prepared to share it with you and I've really, really benefited from that....."

The second theme that emerges is about the nature of the overall learning participants thought they had gained over a two-year period. In the discussion, they were trying to go beyond simple ideas of instrumental learning concerned with acquiring new knowledge, skills and techniques to articulate more significant personal learning. For some of them, the learning was transformational and deeply connected to themselves.

"But how do you explain to somebody. I would say I am a different person, I have learned a huge amount about me, I know something about a few subjects that I didn't know about before and I have picked those. I know something about the subjects that other people have looked at but they are almost peripheral - I could have probably discovered those things in another way, but the learning has come

from within and with the Set. It is the most extraordinary process and life-changing - now - how can you explain that to somebody?"

"If you ask me what have I learned, I think that I have been given the self back, as it were, that I had lost contact with and that's a very moving thing for me and I would have paid double, treble, if I had had it, for that but I wouldn't have known when we were in that room down the corridor [two years ago] that that was what I was going to get and in fact if you'd have said that you were going to get yourself back, I'd have said 'get f****d I'm perfectly alright, thank you very much, clear off.'

At the end of the transcript I added:

"I was struck by the comments made by two people about the whole experience leading to a different sense of self as I, too, felt a very different person myself at the end of these two years than I did at the beginning. And then I wondered how much did my own personal journey influence the journey of others even with little of this journey being explicit to others? Did my own turbulence and confusion at times give me greater empathy and 'holding capacity' to enable others to go through similar journeys? And conversely did the fact that others were going through transformational experiences also impact on me?"

In the questions posed above, I was anticipating a perspective that is central to this thesis. Put briefly, learning is relational, contextual and co-created. In the same way, returning to the themes of chapter three, and the overall title of this thesis, selves emerge in relationship and are co-created with others. Thus transformational learning and the emergence of self are intimately interconnected.

Furthermore, complexity science (Stacey, 2000) shows that in any complex adaptive system, such as a human group, simple linear links between cause and effect cannot be unequivocally traced. Influence is always mutual, not simply one way. The excerpts and the rest of the transcript give examples of where students account for the influence I have had on them, but this influence cannot be conceived in causal explanatory terms i.e. that because I did X, Y happened; therefore Y is explained by X, and if I do X again then Y will predictably happen.

The third theme from the transcript relates to the above paragraph and the inherent unpredictability of living systems. I was surprised, (and pleased), to discover that some of my actions had, unbeknownst to me, exerted considerable influence on the students. For example, one participant said:

"I kept a separate note and I think in every single Set Meeting, you said 'I'm reading a fascinating book at the moment' and you told us of the book that you're reading and you told us of the author and you told us who it's published by and you have taken time to explain why you think it's interesting and what effect it's had on you and quite a few of those books I've taken and I've read....."

This, and other comments, indicated to me the unpredictable nature of learning and influence. I had not intended in mentioning the books to stimulate others to read them. At the time, I was simply, as part of the process of 'checking in' at the beginning of each learning set, sharing my current reading with people. Yet this action on my part clearly had greater impact than I intended or was aware of.

The overall effect on me of this initial inquiry into my influence on others' learning was to strengthen my confidence, and help clarify what was important in my work. The excerpts chosen above demonstrate, in particular, two important values. The first is the value I place on fairness in regard to my treatment of students. In the course of a structured feedback activity on a very recent set meeting, using postcards to offer images to one another, one of the participants said to me that she thought I was 'even-handed'. At the time I registered the remark but did not think too much about it. Over the next few days, though, the remark kept coming back to me and I realised how deeply complimented I felt by her comment. The second important value is the attempt to realise the therapeutic potential of education. This is the edge where therapy and education meet. I suspect that good education is always deeply therapeutic. Similarly good therapy is deeply educational.

Section five: accounting for a residential

In June 2001, following a three-day residential event based on the theme of "an Inquiry into the nature of creativity", which I had, as programme Director, co-designed with a group of three participants from MSc 7, I wrote a narrative account of my experience of the event. The purpose of this account was to address the three inquiry questions (about self-organisation, creativity and presence) as they related to the residential that had emerged as the focus for the next phase of my work from the M Phil transfer paper. A further aim of the account was to write it in such a way that in sending it to the participants, it would serve to stimulate their thinking and generate further learning from the residential.

A major theme of the account was about the role of leadership in enabling self-organising processes and creativity within groups. In the account, I reflected on my role and what I perceived as my failure on the residential to stimulate a creative engagement with the open-ended task of spending a day in London in any way whatsoever that would help understand more about the nature of creativity. I concluded the account with the following reflections, linking my experience in a leadership role at the residential to issues faced in organisational change.

- “To what extent was the activity set up on the residential a reflection of my interests and preoccupations and to what extent was it a genuinely shared creation of the design group. Certainly the idea of taking time in London had genuinely emerged at the second of our planning meetings and I had seen this as a good example of a creative idea being generated through the interaction in a group.
- I think that the lack of full involvement of Pauline [a participant from the programme who was also helping me design the residential] in the planning group had implications for the involvement and understanding of her learning set. I think this is an interesting point about change and shows the ramifications of not fully involving key people in a change process.
- A consequence of the two points above is that the extent to which people felt committed to the task of spending time in London was hugely varied.
- I had a vision of the creative possibilities of the residential. This vision was not shared by others and what happened was very different than what I imagined. I think this is what frequently happens with organisational visions. No matter how compelling, no matter how well communicated, people will make their own sense of it, and implement it in very different ways than the originator of the vision imagined.
- That although people responded in very different ways than I had expected to the task of spending time in London, the way that they responded, and the opportunity to reflect on that and talk with others about their response gave them a significant opportunity for learning.”

The response to sending my ‘ruminations on the residential’, (as I titled my account), to the six participants and my colleague who had been present, and a participant who had not been able to attend, was very full. Over the period of a few weeks, all of the

participants and my colleague wrote to one another and me with their comments on my account. Many of their accounts used the narrative style I had employed.

I was gratified by the capacity of my account to stimulate further thinking.

"Did your paper enrich my learning from the residential? Yes, I cry! Very much. It has taken me the better part of a thoroughly absorbing day to respond to your account but it was time, I think, very well spent and I am grateful for the stimulus."

"I found your account challenging, thought-provoking and deeply touching. The responses that I have seen so far from both Maria and Spencer have really built on this theme of openness. I value and admire your struggle with presence and your relationship with the broader group. The process of reading your paper forced the pace on my own thinking and has caused me to review my own role and action in a deeper way than I might have done - I have started learning more about personal responsibility and the power of culture. I also intend to use your written dialogue (as well as Spencer's and Maria's) to add to my research work. The paper forced me to a degree of introspection about my own learning and my own handling of group process that I have not achieved before."

"Your account was provocative and certainly offers an extra insight to you. It served to increase the longevity of the event and keep it as a subject for discussion. Other residentials normally 'die' after a short time."

The person who had not been present commented:

"I wasn't at the residential, but the piece provoked emotions such as: embarrassment, anger, shock, guilt, surprise, concern, dismay, sorrow and probably the overriding feeling of having missed out."

Some people also commented on the dynamics of leadership and self-organisation as they experienced them on the residential.

"Why were we surprised that a residential on the theme of chaos, complexity & creativity caused such a varied response? Was the tension between 'going with the flow' and attempting to manage the best outcomes (tight and loose)? Should the discomfort felt to varying degrees and at varying stages reflect the success of the residential in invoking some sense of the topic into individuals' actual experiences?"

"How do people cope with their frustrations that naturally arise on a self-organising programme? How do we handle our dislike, disapproval, disagreement, fear, anxiety, uncertainty, our not knowing?"

The above comments, of course, are a very partial and highly selective representation of the rich responses to my account. (My full account and the detailed responses to it can all be seen on my web-site, www.minotaursegg.co.uk). At this point, I am making these selections to indicate the power of my writing to stimulate thought, emotion and learning, and also to highlight themes of leadership, self-organisation and self-management which are critical to the dynamics of each programme.

In reply to the varied accounts that had been written, I wrote a further response. Re-reading this now I am pleased with the overall quality of writing. This quality is itself, I believe, a reflection of the quality of response generated by my original account. In other words, it is an example of reciprocal, circular influence. I influence my students and they influence me, or vice versa - my students influence me and I influence my students.

I quote from my further response below as it indicates the important unfolding theme in my practice of grappling with the tension and dilemmas in acting with authority on a self-managed learning programme. I said:

"Reading your reflections on the residential, what really stands out is the sheer variety and difference of response and learning to the residential.....I know I should not be surprised by such idiosyncratic responses but it really shows me how truly impossible it is to predict or control someone's learning."

".....I think a key issue our writing is exploring is the nature of authority in a group/qualifications programme/organisation.....so the shift to self-managed learning is part of this wider contextual shift towards being less dependent on traditional forms of authority – in the field of education, encouraging students to find their own authority, manage their own learning, become active learners, more effectively learn how to learn. I'm sure we all know the rhetoric! And I think the MSc is an opportunity to explore over two years what this rhetoric means in practice – to experience the frustrations as well as the joys of this form of learning....."

".....But this emphasis on and advocacy of self-managed learning does not of course instantly create high-performing, all-singing, all-dancing learners for the new millenium. At the same time, as the attempt to build more equal, less strictly hierarchical forms of relating, there continue to exist real differences in power and position in both organisational and academic life.....We are dealing with personal development which has to be fundamentally internally generated and evaluated and performance which is externally measured and assessed."

The last sentence above illustrates a key tension on a self-managed qualification programme. This could also be understood in Habermas' (1987) terms as the dialectic between the individual 'life world' of the participant with their unique subjectivity, cultural context, personal values and standards of judgement, and the 'system world' of academic institutions oriented to consistency, outcomes and 'means-ends functionality'. Whilst a tension on the MSc programme, though, (as it is indeed in this PhD too), this can also be a source of creativity. It is this tension, and the dilemmas engendered by this tension, that I have become interested in exploring further.

Section six: further inquiries on the postgraduate programme in People and Organisational Development

Following the activities described in the two previous sections, I undertook two further inquiries of a similar nature.

The first was with a learning group from MSc7. At the end of their programme in January 2001, I had a discussion with three participants and their set adviser about how I had influenced them in my role as programme director. (The complete transcript for this conversation is on my web-site.) At one point, the discussion took a particularly interesting turn and focussed on the effect of my 'presence', one of the three areas I had, from my MPhil paper, set out to inquire into. One participant described what she felt as quite an extreme range of 'presence' that she encountered. She referred to this as experiencing an 'in' Paul (internally focussed and preoccupied even whilst presenting to a group) and an 'out' Paul (lively and fully engaged). One of the capacities of the 'out' Paul was my ability to fully enter into and participate in activities on the residential. (A good example of this is offered in vignette four at the beginning of this chapter). Re-reading the transcript now, I think she goes on to make an interesting point about the nature of my participation.

"Can I make a distinction, actually..... I'm just thinking about when we went to the Tate Modern..... and I experienced you differently when we went to The Tate Modern, participating than I had experienced you participating in other events and the difference when we went to The Tate Modern where I felt, personally, I found you to be much more accessible as a person and communicative as a person. Because I felt you were participating with me..... whereas when you were participating in the theatre that you were participating in the event for yourself.... I think that's the distinction..... so I got a lot more from you at The Tate and the walk to The Tate, the journey up on the train and the walk to The Tate.

Of course it was a smaller group - there were only three of us - so that brings a different quality to it as well - it makes it easier and more personal..... but I felt that you were with me, that you were hearing me and I was hearing you and we were much more readily able to share and understand one another and that and your writings afterwards really kind of helped me that's something that I would say is a direct event that really helped my learning and what you wrote in particular about that event and how I had to respond to that made me really think and go that level deeper than I had at that point."

I find her distinction helpful in thinking more carefully about the activity of participating in a group from a position of authority. Generally, in my professional practice, I think it is incumbent on me to participate *with* people. Occasionally, there may be value in modeling participating fully, just for myself and almost for the hell of it, to encourage others to more fully participate, and to question traditional ideas of facilitation in which the position of the facilitator is conceived a in neutral, detached, objective manner. But mostly, as her comment suggests, greater learning is generated from a position of participating with, maintaining what Peter Reason and John Heron (2001) would call my "critical subjectivity."

The second occasion of inquiry practice was when I was asked as an external contributor to run a one-day session on facilitation skills for MSc 8 at one of their residential events in February 2001. This was a group that I had no other involvement with. I followed the practice of writing an account of my work with them and emailing it to all sixteen participants. On this occasion I had only one reply. This confirmed to me that people do not simply respond to the material sent to them, but rather they respond in the context of the relationship that I have with them. On MSc 8, compared with MSc 7, that relationship was short-term and transient (for one day only), and did not generate sufficient commitment or interest to respond to my account.

Section seven: questions of values

Throughout 2001, as the inquiry practices described so far in this chapter were taking place, I was simultaneously writing the two autobiographical accounts now found in chapter five of this thesis. Part of the purpose in writing these accounts, especially the second one, was to help clarify and identify the values that are important in shaping my practice. My supervisor, Jack Whitehead commented on reading the first of my autobiographical accounts, in an email dated January 25th 2001:

"I've re-read the paper for our last supervision group meeting. You hold my interest because of the clarity of the autobiographical descriptions. Where I start feeling some tension is when I ask myself questions about 'enquiry'/action research/professional practice. This is where I need your help. In many autobiographical pieces I read from action researchers, I can understand something about the human purposes and values the individual wants me to use to question them about their influence in the world and to question them about their intentions to live their values more fully in their practice. I really do need your help in understanding how you see your autobiographical account revealing something about the values you hold and use to 'guide' your enquiry."

At this point in the thesis, it is worth giving a brief account of Jack Whitehead's ideas about 'living educational theory' and the key role of 'values' in his thinking. These ideas, and my ongoing critical engagement with them, have significantly influenced my thinking about, and practice of, action research inquiry.

Jack Whitehead's work (1989, 1993, 1999, 2000, 2002) has been a rigorous, sustained attempt to create a different form of educational theory. Since working as a teacher, and having initially been drawn to finding an educational philosophy in the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, sociology and psychology of education, he came to realise that these disciplines, and the kinds of abstract theory they generated in the form of propositional knowledge, did not sufficiently directly relate to and help inform important dimensions of his own practice as a teacher. They were too detached from the kinds of judgements he was making every day in the classroom about the quality and worth of his educational practice. This experience, and his subsequent thinking and practice supervising masters and doctoral students, is clearly behind the comment he made to me about my work in the postscript of chapter three, which I refer further to in of chapter six, that:

"I reckon that a move onto being able to say what is important to you in your practice as an educator will require a creative break with your propositional (mind) into a different epistemological and ontological relationship with your bodymind."

Whitehead draws on Schon (1995) to situate his work in a new epistemology of practice, distinct from traditional epistemologies. This is an epistemology connecting theory and practice, knowing and doing. Rather than impersonal, propositional theorising about education, Whitehead wants to put the 'I' at the heart of educational theory. He sees this 'I' as experiencing itself as a 'living contradiction'. This contradiction happens through the person holding important values and then experiencing him or herself negating these values in their actual practice. As Atkinson (2000) has pointed out, this contradiction is similar to Argyris and Schon's (1974) view of the discrepancy between 'espoused theories' and 'theories-in-use'.

The teacher or educator, then, as soon as they ask themselves the important question - "how do I improve what I am doing?" - becomes an action researcher as they inquire into their own practice in order to develop and improve it. Whitehead (2000) says that, arising from this question about how I improve my practice, a "distinctively 'educational' research methodology" can be developed. He (2000) characterises this methodology as;

"Based on action reflection spirals of the form:

I experience a concern when my values are negated in my practice.

I imagine a way forward.

I act.

I evaluate.

I modify my concerns, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluations."

A key part of Whitehead's (1999) argument is that "the tension which moves the enquiry forward is focussed on the desire to live values more fully in the face of the experience of their denial in practice." He, therefore, places values at the heart of the educational enterprise. Education cannot be reduced to means-ends instrumentality. Values are not abstract, disembodied, solely linguistic entities but are expressed through their embodiment in practice. These values become the basis for the standards of judgement that practitioners use as they assess and consider how to improve their practice. Whitehead (2000) acknowledges the influence of Moira Laidlow (1996) in showing "that the meanings of the values I use as my educational standards are themselves living and developmental in the course of their emergence in practice."

I very much agree with Jack Whitehead and Moira Laidlow about the emergence of values in practice. This thesis, and especially this chapter, is an attempt to track my values as they emerge in the course of my work as an educator on a Masters programme. I also like the idea that we better come to know what our values are by how we experience ourselves acting in living situations and by the discomfort caused when we realise we are negating our values in practice, rather than considering values as abstractions, remote from actual practice. Vignette one at the beginning of this chapter gives an illustration of my own experience of appreciating, through the challenge of others, how I was acting in contradiction to the values of participation and co-creation I had been espousing.

I further agree with the dialectical movement and logic Jack Whitehead sees underlying processes of inquiry and improvement. Such a dialectical logic is at the root of my thesis title. I also appreciate his emphasis and encouragement for each individual to explicitly create their own 'living educational theory', which represents their attempt to make sense of and improve their practice, and shows the living standards of judgement they use to evaluate their practice.

Over the years I have grappled with Jack Whitehead's ideas, sometimes argumentatively, at other times in a more collaborative manner. The following excerpts from a long dialogue conducted through email, dated April 13th 2001, illustrates my attempt, as I engage with his ideas, to clarify aspects of my own thinking. (My comments are in Gill Sans light, Jack's are in Times New Roman, initiated with the letter J).

"So this brings me to the question of what you mean by values. I agree with you absolutely when you say in your 1989 article, that "education is a value-laden activity". In fact I would go as far to say that life is a value-laden activity. Certainly business is; the justification of business as being solely about the 'bottom line' is a statement of value and thankfully is coming under greater challenge and scrutiny.....

I find at least three different ways of thinking about values in your articles. In the 1989 article, you describe values as;

"The human goals which we use to give our lives their particular form. These values which are embodied in our practice, are often referred to in terms such as freedom, justice, democracy, (Peters 1966) and love and productive work (Fromm 1960)."

The values you list here seem very broad categories which we can all subscribe to (like Motherhood and Apple Pie). I am not sure of the usefulness of such broad categories abstracted from the specific contexts in which they are manifest. They suffer from the same problems as the written statements organisations often create advocating values such as teamwork, openness, trust etc. In organisations these value statements create as much, if not more, cynicism as people experience their negation in practice rather than a drive for individual and organisational development.

J. Couldn't agree more – that's why I wrote that 'These values which are embodied... are often referred to in terms such as.... I wasn't intending to communicate the idea that this was the way I wanted embodied values to be understood.

In your later article on Educative Relations in a New Era (1999), you offer a different sense of values. Here the context is much more specific, that of research supervision, and you state that "my 'intention' is to live the above values in my practice." These 'above' values are stated as:

- "logics of educational knowledge in creating a new discipline of educational enquiry;
- including 'I' as a living contradiction in educational enquiries;
- understanding educational enquiries as living processes of self-creation and transformation which cannot be captured solely within an idea of 'structure' or 'framework';
- recognising that important human values, such as the spiritual aesthetic and ethical values which motivate and form part of educational explanations, cannot be communicated in solely linguistic form"

These look less like what would normally be understood by values and more like the condensed summary of a sophisticated set of hard fought for ideas which have emerged over a lifetime's educational experience.

J. I like this. I increasingly see my values in terms of hard fought for ideas, which I use to give meaning and purpose to my life – we'll need to clarify what we are meaning by ideas – I'm including my feelings.

Later in the same article you refer to the knowledge we create by asking "How do I live my values more fully in my practice?" At this point I feel closer to your sense of values because I think you are moving onto a notion of practice as a form of improvisatory self-expression

(Winter, 1998b) in which values are co-created rather than the realisation of previously conceived values held by separate individuals.

J. I see my values being expressed, communicated and developed through a process which involves both my actions to realise my values and my willingness to remain open to their development through my interactions and relationships with others.

I also question in the first definition of values quoted earlier what you imply when you refer to the word 'use'. This suggests a more conscious instrumental view than I think is how our lives are actually shaped. I think we may have recourse to values as a way of making sense of our actions and what happens to us. I think this is very different from claiming as you stated in our conversation at the supervision group that values explain our actions. In your article (1989) you make the same point in saying;

"When offering an explanation for an individual's development these values can be used as reasons for action".

By using the word 'explanation' you indicate a causal link between our values and our actions in which values become the motivational link to what we do. My present action is seen as a result of my past values. I think that values are constructed in retrospect as way of understanding and making meaning in the messy complexity of our lived experience.

J. I'd say that I was offering an intentional connection rather than a causal connect in my use of the word 'explanation'. I see explanations in terms of reasons for why something occurs. My own understanding of living educational theories is that they are constituted by the explanations offered by individuals for their own learning in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' Again, I think both processes are involved in developing living theories. My present actions can be explained in terms of a relationship between my past values and the values I am constructing as I engage in the creation of the future. I do think that our understanding of the values which help to constitute our present practices have been constructed in retrospect as a way of understanding and making meaning in the messy complexity of our lived experience.

Essentially I think the main area I differ from you is that I think you encompass the complexity and richness of educational development (by which I would include self-development) within an overly narrow framework of a discussion about values.

J. I think you are probably right here so there may not be a difference between us. We may differ in our perceptions about the positive implications of doing something about it.”

I reproduce this excerpt at some length because I want to give an illustration of the emergence of my thinking in a dialogical way through a deeply felt interaction with a ‘significant other’. This is the point I have been constantly making and illustrating throughout the thesis - both my practice, and thinking about my practice, emerge through interaction and relation with others. As Winter (1998a) says:

“Because if thinking is crucially a matter of finding an individual voice it is also about understanding oneself in relation to the cultural traditions within which one finds oneself; it involves, therefore, thinking in dialogue with others. Other people’s thinking, based on their experience, is a key resource in enabling us to think creatively about our own, to think critically about the thoughts we started with in order to construct anew cognitive space, into which we might, provisionally, decide to move.” (p. 67)

The dialogue quoted above was an important passage of writing and communicating for me which helped articulate some of the differences of view I had with Jack.

Now I would summarise these differences in two main ways. The first is constituted by the different places we would each draw the line between therapy and education, which I think is an expression of our different lived experiences and degree of comfort in these areas. The second is based on our different perspectives of the self. I understand Jack’s work to locate both values and the dialectical tension driving development as primarily *within* the individual. My own perspective is to locate values as emergent, co-created processes occurring *between* people.

This last point takes me back to the question raised by Jack at the end of chapter five and mentioned again earlier in this section about the connection between the theoretical perspectives I outline about the nature of the self (in chapter three) and my educational practice. I do think that the propositional theorising in chapter three is broadly helpful in indicating what is important to me as an educator. It suggests the value of imagination, co-creation, relationship, and multiplicity in my practice. It also provides a good theoretical base on which to ground these values. Where I agree with Jack is that to demonstrate these values in my practice it is not enough to theorise abstractly about

them. They need to be shown in action. For Jack, this has led to experimentation with the possibilities of multi-media for different forms of representation of practice. For myself, it has led to the creation and sharing of narrative accounts.

This demonstration of values in action is what I have been attempting in the earlier parts of this chapter. I will return to this now as I continue to describe my work on the Masters programme.

Section eight: ongoing work with MSc10

Having already experimented with showing accounts of my practice to people who had participated in working with me in a variety of contexts (both with the MSc and in other situations, as outlined in chapter one), I was keen to build on this experience when I was offered the opportunity to be programme director of MSc 10, starting in January 2002. It was also decided that in addition to being programme director I would co-set advise one of the learning groups along with a colleague in order to offer her the opportunity of learning to work alongside me as a set adviser on the masters programme. Influenced by the conversations and written dialogues I had been having with Jack Whitehead about values in educational practice, I was now interested in tracking, as I worked with MSc 10, the emergence of my values and their relationship to significant judgements I made throughout the programme.

Accordingly, in December 2001, I attempted to outline what my educational intentions were, before beginning work for the programme. These were as follows:

- To offer individuals a rigorous, sustained and ongoing engagement with issues relating to the development of people and organisations. The fact that the MSc exists over a two year period is important as it allows the time for issues to surface, themes to develop, relationships to be built up, and for learning to unfold.
- To help create an environment in which participants can explore the issues and questions relating to people and organisational development that matter to them.
- To create an engaging, stimulating, challenging, inquiring atmosphere on the programme. This means that participants will find their experience of the programme distinctive, noteworthy, impactful, taking them beyond their normal and habitual ways of understanding and experiencing themselves, others, groups and organisations.

- That the ways of working and overall approach are not abusive or manipulative and respect the right of individuals to move through the programme at their own pace and in their own style within the constraints and demands of a postgraduate programme.
- For the programme to act as a crucible within which the alchemy of development can potentially occur for each participant.
- To engage the participants in an inquiring process about how to create this crucible together and therefore not to have overly pre-determined, fixed ideas about how to create the appropriate crucible. In other words to work in a way in which the MSc is genuinely co-created between the teaching staff and the participants.
- To encourage experiential learning which means engaging people at an intellectual, emotional, spiritual, physical and imaginative level. In particular to find ways of working that encourage greater imaginative freedom and expression and that help new forms emerge for people to be able to represent and account for their work and learning.
- To understand and work with the MSc as a 'rite of passage' for participants. This involves thinking about the MSc using ideas and practices from mythology, story-telling and ritual.
- For the experience of being on and doing the programme to be a significant source of learning about developing people and organisations. For participants to be able to learn about themselves, relationships with others, group interaction, organisational dynamics and development from their lived experience of this on the programme. This means developing good reflective practices as individuals, groups and as a total community to bring this about.
- For participants to develop a critical perspective on the field of people and organisational development. That is to be able to think about the way that the field is constructed within wider economic, social and political settings, to look at how power relations shape this field, and to look at their own role in maintaining and changing power relationships within organisations.
- For knowledge and learning to be used in a liberating, emancipatory way and not just in an instrumental way to make individuals and organisations more effective. That is

helping free people from oppressive, subjugating definitions and social practices whether self-internalised or imposed by others.

- To explore transparently, honestly and candidly the tension between participants following a programme based on a self managed learning philosophy, which gives them power and control over their own learning objectives and methodologies, and the fact that the programme is set up within an organisational context and externally accredited University structure with given standards and authority about what is deemed acceptable or not for the award of a post-graduate degree.

Re-reading this list of intentions, it already begins to fill out the values of imagination, co-creation, relationship, and multiplicity that I identified at the end of the previous section. It also embodies important other values such as transparency, openness, critical engagement and reflection, and emancipation. I trust that, without me needing to spell it out in detail, the reader is able to see connections between this list and the autobiographical writings in chapter four. A significant thread, which integrates the autobiographical writing in section three of chapter five with the underlying theme of the vignettes at the beginning of this chapter, is about the use of authority to facilitate learning in groups.

I shared this list of intentions with the staff group I had helped recruit to the programme. Following the first four-day residential of this programme held on 5-8 February 2002, which the programme staff designed and delivered, I wrote an account of the residential, which I circulated to all the participants and my colleagues who had worked with me on the residential. This rather long account (just over 7500 words) explained the purpose of sending this writing to the participants, situated it within the overall body of work I was doing for my PhD outlined the educational intentions for the programme, and then used this as a framework for assessing the residential. In particular, I focussed on how I believed ways of working on the residential had facilitated high levels of creativity and involvement. I concluded the first part of the account by saying:

- “I am going into some detail about the design and experience of the first day because I believe that what happened on that day was influential in shaping the overall four days, which then become influential in shaping the culture that evolves on the programme. I believe that the way we designed the first and subsequent days helped shape the levels of creativity and involvement that

emerged in later parts of the residential. In particular, I think high levels of participation were shaped, in addition to processes I have already elaborated, by

- placing high value and priority on processes of group formation and building rather than the presentation of content
- deliberately not having any external speakers involved in this residential and thereby laying more emphasis on the resources in the staff team and participant group
- my colleague contacting people by email, in advance of one of the sessions, and giving a living demonstration of the possibilities of e-learning, by building her session around peoples' response to her email
- including an Open Space session within the programme which allows the group to self organise around issues of relevance and importance to them.

Yet I am not wanting to posit an overly egotistical, simple cause and effect relationship between the actions that we took as a staff group and the outcomes I observed as high levels of creativity and involvement. Ideas from complexity theory (Stacey 2000) suggest that in any complex adaptive system, such as a group of people interacting, links between cause and effect are complex and multiple and cannot be traced. Was it the cleverness of our design that facilitated the emergence of creative engagement with the programme, or were we fortunate to be working with a group of highly motivated talented people who would have creatively engaged no matter what we did?

- And, furthermore, by what standards of judgement am I claiming that there were high levels of creative engagement. This is my framing of the situation. Perhaps for others the levels of engaged creativity were normal or even low. For me, these levels would be evidenced by:
- the quality of the participant presentations I have already mentioned
- the level of discussion in the different sessions
- my lived, embodied experience during the four days of a lively atmosphere which includes feeling stimulated and deeply engaged myself
- noticing people by day three beginning to spontaneously offer ideas and suggestions such as doing a drama together on a subsequent residential and offering a little black book to write sayings from the course in
- the responsive and active way in which participants took part in an Open Space session on the morning of the last day

- the willingness of participants to come forward at the end of this residential to create a design team for the next residential
- comments that were made at the review of the residential on the last afternoon
- the explicitly and frequently stated desire of many participants to ensure that the whole group worked well as a learning community; this was especially in response to the uncomfortable self-managed process they had gone through to create three small learning groups that would exist for at least eight months, and possibly for the duration of the programme."

In sending this account to participants, as well as using this as an opportunity to critically reflect on the residential, I also intended the account itself to be an intervention that helped foster an overall learning culture, to facilitate the programme becoming a 'learning organisation' (Senge, 1990). By candidly sharing my reflections on, and inquiry processes about, the residential, I hoped to both model and stimulate the capacity for others to engage in this way.

In the terms of Rowland's (2000) framework, I was aiming to acknowledge and legitimate the third context and source of knowledge on an educational programme - this is the 'shared context'; that is, the learning to be gained from the experience of participating together in the overall process of the programme. Rowland contrasts this with two other contexts; the 'public context', which is the traditional content of knowledge available in public texts; and the 'personal context', which is the knowledge people have from their own experience and which they relate to the 'public context'. Rowland says all these three areas of context are critically interrelated, and different educational and therapeutic activities will tend to emphasise one or other of the three contexts. My previous experience of the masters programme had indicated to me that some people found learning from the 'shared context' the most problematic and contentious of the three contexts. However, as the quotes from participants in sections four and five indicate, many participants over the years have indicated that it has been in the whole experience of the process of the programme, in learning sets and the total course group, rather than in any specific knowledge content or acquisition of development tools and techniques, that their most profound learning lay.

In addition, my account of the residential picked up two 'critical incidents' (Schein, 1985), or what John Shotter (1999) calls 'striking events' or 'living moments'. These were incidents which had significantly emotionally impacted on me during the residential

and which had given me the most food for thought subsequently. Before writing my account of the residential I had written an email, dated 11 March 2002, to the participants outlining these incidents and asking them three questions as follows:

1. Can you remember and describe as fully as possible what you were feeling at the time of these incidents?
2. What significance, if any, did these incidents have for you, and what do you think they might have had for the group as a whole?
3. Looking back now at the residential, is there a particular moment(s) or incident(s) that stand(s) out for you now?

I also said that:

"My preference would be for you to send your answers to everyone but if you would rather just send them back to me that is fine and I will treat your comments as confidential - I may refer to them in my account of the residential but I would not identify you."

In response to this mail, nine of the seventeen participants replied. Of the nine responses, four were sent back to me only and five were sent to the whole community. I don't know how many of the mails that were sent to me were a result of a conscious choice to restrict the comments to me only and how many were simply a matter of unreflectively and habitually pressing the 'reply to sender' button.

Both these incidents were concerned with the way I had used my authority on two separate occasions. In the first incident, when I had overruled a colleague in mid-session and changed the timing of the session she was leading, I had felt very self-critical of, and rather surprised by, my behaviour. In the second, when I had strongly challenged a participant about a comment she made which I took to be devaluing of a final evaluation process, I was more ambivalent about what I had done. I was interested, in asking the three questions above to participants, to find out the impact of these incidents on them. In the account I wrote about the residential after receiving participants' answers to my questions above, I commented:

"Overall in relation to all the questions, I found peoples' responses thoughtful, encouraging and perceptive. I was pleased with the very direct and open way

people had responded to my questions. The comments themselves showed me that, as always, there is a wealth of response to any emotionally charged incident, and that people will make very different meanings of it. There were also some interesting reflections on the role and dilemmas of authority in a self-managed programme."

I was also very heartened by two responses which affirmed my intention of encouraging and modelling an inquiring attitude on the programme, and indicating, as I said in my account, that "it was possible to co-inquire together into processes that effected all of us on the residential and that were significant to the role of a development professional."

These two separate comments were:

"I was struck by and pleased that you asked us about this."

"A further comment I'd like to make is that, on receiving this request for feedback, Paul, I felt very enthusiastic and excited that you were willing to elicit feedback and 'put yourself on the line', first. It means that I can feel willing, trusting and positive about doing the same in the future and that the door is open for a lot of very real developmental work! (I hesitated whether to put this, as I don't want it to sound patronising or as if I'm trying to 'score points' with the course leader...but my feelings are a very strong and excited 'YES!!, this is great stuff and I want to be a part of it!')"

MSc10's second residential was held on 26-28 June 2002. This three-day residential was designed by myself working with five participants drawn from the three different learning sets. After the residential I wrote an account which I sent to all the participants and staff on MSc 10. I used a dialogical form to frame this account, consisting of a conversation between three characters: A, the protagonist; B, the questioner; and C, the cynic/critic. (C, this last character, is the same voice as the reviewer in chapter four.)

In this account, I continued to explore themes of co-creation, participation, involvement and authority, as they played out in this event. The following excerpt from this account illustrates these themes:

A. "That was a good residential

B. On what basis do you say that? What standards of judgement are you using? What does the fact that you thought it was good tell us of your own values?

A. Slow down – is this a dialogue or an interrogation?

C. Well, the participants said it was good by and large according to their written feedback in the review at the end so it must have been OK. All's well that ends well.

B. Yes that is potentially one source of evidence but just because the participants thought it was good does that mean it automatically was? If you just take that perspective, you are heading towards a customer services based view of education where the customer is king (or queen). The point is also to try and discover what your judgement that an event is good might indicate about your values

A. OK. Let me try and answer that. When I look back at the residential what stands out?

Firstly, that I experienced the residential as a genuine act of co-creation and co-design between myself as the course director and the four participants who had chosen to help design this residential. Compared to my previous experience of designing residentials with participants on other postgraduate programmes, this residential showed higher ownership of the event than any previous occasion. Additionally this was the first of four residentials that the participants are involved in the co-design of, so it was especially significant to create such high levels of ownership for the first event. This seems important in creating an overall culture of participation and collaboration which can be sustained throughout the rest of the programme. These high levels of ownership and involvement were evidenced throughout the event, but what I think was particularly significant was;

- that one of the participants (rather than me) wrote, together with others, the joining material and sent it out from her own organisation
- that one of the participants who was not in the design team offered to lead a session herself. This was a relatively unconventional session involving dance and movement and potentially highly exposing for the person running the session. This session seemed to be particularly appreciated and the participant received very heartfelt and warm feedback for the session and the way that she had run it

- that another participant started the residential and the whole of the introduction to the residential which took over an hour and a half was managed by the participants. I did not lead this section at all

C. You seem to have had an easy ride! What did *you* do?

A. I'll come back to that. But I was talking about the criteria for judging this a good residential and emphasising that my first criteria is the ownership and leadership of the residential by the participants in the design group.

The second criteria would be an overall coherence of design.

B. What do you mean by this? Where did this come from?

A. This stemmed from the very first meeting of the design group in one of the London Underground Infrastructure companies offices in Canary Wharf. I had started the meeting by asking the design team members what they wanted to learn from their involvement in creating and delivering this residential. There was initially a rather cautious and inhibited atmosphere in response to this and one participant expressed resentment that she had to be involved in creating this residential when she was very busy. There was a danger of the residential being seen as a necessary burdensome chore rather than an exciting opportunity. As we talked about this, and I asked questions to surface the feelings people had about being involved with this, and tried not to react defensively (in either a self-justifying or aggressive manner) to the perception of the residential as a imposed burden, a shift began to happen in which the residential could genuinely be seen as a challenging and potentially creative opportunity. A key turning point was the realisation that the residential could nourish both the participants and the members of the design team. This was symbolised with the idea of the theme of the residential being 'a gift to ourselves'. "

After sending out this account, I did not receive any written response. I did hear two people in the learning set I was co-leading refer to my account in passing, which indicated to me that they had absorbed and assimilated the content, and were referencing it to other situations.

MSc10's third residential was held from 12-15 November 2002. My account of this is represented in the vignettes at the beginning of this chapter. In response to this account,

I received three replies, all from people in the learning set I am working with. Their comments helped affirm the value of the process of sharing these accounts with them, especially in modelling openness and an inquiring attitude. They said:

"As always I really appreciate you sharing your writing. Not only does it provide a great journal of the residentials, but you manage to write so honestly and reflectively."

"Thanks for this Paul - I very much enjoyed reading the vignettes and was struck once again by your honest reflection and critique of self and others ('again' ref. back to the information from the first residential). Equally I am impressed by your openness in issuing something so personal to a wide range of MSc participants - I remember this creating a shift in my attitude to the MSc following your first circulation - it certainly meant I was, and have continued to be, more open about myself and my own reactions whilst participating in residentials or the learning set."

"My first thoughts on this piece is how honest you have been which has made the reading very engaging. I felt disappointed when it finished and would be interested to read the rest of the account from the residential. Of the three accounts you have now written this was the most enjoyable, due to the detail and the honesty of your own thoughts and observations."

Section nine: my 'living educational theory'

So, at the end of this chapter, what do I conclude is my 'living educational theory'? That is, what are the underlying embodied values and principles that inform my work as an educator of professionals in people and organisational development, as evidenced in the accounts and reflections in the previous pages?

I will frame my 'living educational theory' as a set of questions revolving around potential contradictions and paradoxes to indicate they are not a static immutable set of principles, which I have now succeeded in resolving and mastering. These questions also provide a continuing way of "living life as inquiry" (Marshall, 1999). If preferred, they can be converted to statements, by taking away the 'how to' at the beginning and adding '-ing' to the first verb.

- How to use my authority in the most influential way to encourage and enable others to find their authority and become self-managing?
- How to contribute my knowledge, skills and talents fully to a programme and at the same time co-create the programme with the participants?
- How to fully participate and retain my 'critical subjectivity'?
- How to act fairly and 'even-handedly' to all participants in the midst of a range of emotional responses to different individuals?
- How to inspire people and demonstrate that education and learning are more than gaining a qualification and/or functional means to an end and/or the acquisition of knowledge-based tool kits whilst recognising that people want and need qualifications and also believe and feel they need tools in order to do their jobs?
- How to create an environment that engages peoples' imagination and touches their souls without this becoming another series of recipes and techniques for engineering creativity?
- How to challenge the status quo and existing entrenched patterns of thinking and dominant power relations whilst working within current organisational and institutional frameworks?
- How to lead and facilitate self-organising processes?

This final question leads me into chapter eight.

Chapter Eight

Working with self-organising processes

Introduction

Self-organisation is an important, recurrent theme in this thesis. This theme is expressed in both the process of writing the thesis as well as its contents. Regarding the process, I did not write the entire draft thesis last autumn in a well-planned objective-driven manner with a pre-determined structure, (which is not to say that it lacks discipline). I have tried to allow the form of the thesis to emerge in the writing of it, and let the activity of the writing itself, and the responses to the draft thesis, shape the further stages of work. To refer back to the metaphor of a patchwork quilt: as the quilt is being crafted, each patch (chapter or section or sentence or word) sown is influenced by the emerging shape of the quilt (the overall thesis or chapter or section or sentence) which is itself influenced by the next patch being created. Neither the whole (the quilt) nor the parts (each patch) are prior or determining. Both shape or co-create one another. In relation to the content of the thesis so far, there are many references to self-organisation. This is, for example, at the basis of my email discussion with Chris Bache in chapter five, as well as being central to vignette three in the previous chapter.

The emphasis in this chapter will be on illustrating and recounting stories of my practice in working with self-organising processes to facilitate change. The main voice will be, as in the previous chapter, the voice of reflective narrative practice. Additional theoretical perspectives to the approach described in this chapter are given in appendix one, which is written, like chapter three, in a traditional, academic, propositional style – what I have termed my ‘scholarly voice’.

Section one: self-organisation and paradox

Regarding the importance of self-organisation, Fritjof Capra (1997) says:

“Indeed, self-organisation has emerged as perhaps the central concept in the systems view of life, and like the concepts of feedback and self-regulation it is closely linked to networks. The pattern of life, we might say, is a network pattern capable of self-organisation.” (p. 82-3)

Another significant emerging theme in the thesis is paradox. The theme of paradox appears in chapter two in relation to Simon's (1996) article on case-study. Furthermore, at the end of the previous chapter, I express my 'living educational theory' as a series of paradoxical questions or statements. In chapter three, I grapple with the paradoxical nature of the self in arguing that the self is both separate and related, singular and multiple, cognitive and embodied, concrete and imaginal. In the conclusion to chapter three, I enumerate further paradoxes of the self: that the self is both 'particle' and 'wave' (Zohar, 1990); centre and periphery; both the process and product of its own organisation. At the time of writing the chapter, I was still thinking within the framework of 'both-and' as a means of formulating paradox. Since then, in an email dated 17th November 2002, Professor Ralph Stacey commented on this chapter that:

"In the conclusion you argue against taking an "either...or" view of the two contradictory viewpoints and suggest that they point to the paradoxical nature of the self. However there is no explanation of how we can think about these contradictory perspectives in paradoxical terms - are they really paradoxes or just two incompatible ways of thinking? If the former then just how do they form a paradox?"

This comment led me to reading more carefully the writing of Ralph Stacey and his colleagues about the nature of paradox (Stacey, Griffin & Shaw, 2000; Stacey, 2001; Griffin, 2002; Shaw, 2002). Stacey and his colleagues argue that by thinking of paradox in terms of 'both-and', the essential contradictory nature of paradox is thereby eliminated. They reason that the resolution, and thereby the effective elimination, of paradox by 'both-and' thinking has its roots in Kant's philosophy, which has been enormously influential in laying the philosophical foundations for the scientific method and current ways of thinking about systems. Rather than thinking in terms of 'both-and', Stacey and his colleagues draw on Hegelian philosophy and the work of G.H. Mead to argue for conceiving of paradox in terms of 'at the same time'. Griffin (2002) says:

"Holding this sense of at the same time is to become aware of key paradoxes and it remains uncomfortable. The very essence of such paradoxes is that they do not settle down to a resolution." (p. 13).

Stacey, Griffin and Shaw draw on the sciences of complexity to argue that some strands of more radical thinking within this so-called 'new science' itself, particularly the work of the Nobel Prize winning chemist Ilya Prigogine (1984, 1989, 1997), and the biologist

Brian Goodwin (1994), present a significant challenge to the dominant scientific paradigm. This includes typical ways of thinking about paradox as well as how the nature of systems, the relationship between parts and wholes, cause and effect, predictability, and time are conceived. Griffin (2002) says ; “what is being challenged in the natural sciences by thinkers like Prigogine, is precisely the *validity of the elimination of paradox*” (his emphasis).

Paradox has emerged as a defining and somewhat startling feature of complexity because of the discovery by Prigogine and others that complex adaptive systems (as they are called by complexity scientists – Stacey et al use the phrase complex responsive processes instead of complex adaptive systems) exist in paradoxical states where order and disorder co-exist at the same time. Moreover these paradoxical conditions, what Waldrop (1994) evocatively describes as life existing at “the edge of chaos”, are critical to the capacity for complex adaptive systems (including individuals, organisations and societies) to adapt, learn, change and be creative. The sciences of complexity have, in addition, challenged traditional Cartesian-Newtonian ideas of predictability by showing that in living systems the future is inherently unpredictable. Life is always moving towards an open-ended future. This is what Stacey and his colleagues refer to as the further paradox of the ‘known–unknown’, in which the future is ‘perpetually under construction’, that is both radically unknowable, yet also at the same time recognisable. Stacey (2001) says:

“Movement is toward a future that is under perpetual construction by the movement itself. There is no mature or final state, only perpetual iteration of identity and difference, continuity and transformation, the known and the unknown, at the same time. The future is unknowable but recognisable, the known-unknown.” (p. 60).

There is, moreover, an important and critical connection between paradox and self-organisation. It is precisely the capacity for self-organisation that enables complex adaptive systems to evolve to ‘the edge of chaos’ where order and disorder paradoxically co-exist. Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2000) define self-organisation as follows:

“Very briefly, self-organisation is a process in which local interaction between parts of an organisation produces emergent patterns of behaviour of a coherent kind in the whole, all in the absence of any overall blueprint or plan for that whole. Local interaction produces a global pattern that need not be designed.” (p.18).

In a recent conversation (26th November 2002), Patricia Shaw said to me that she and her colleagues now consider self-organisation and emergence to be conceptually identical when systems are thought of as temporal processes rather than spatial entities. Self-organisation and emergence then describe and point to the same process. That is why she now refers to processes of 'self-organising emergence', whilst acknowledging that this is a tautology.

Section two: working with 'self-organising emergence'

I have for a long time been interested in and an admirer of the work of Ralph Stacey and the way it has evolved with his colleagues Patricia Shaw and Doug Griffin. Many writers and practitioners in management and organisational development (Wheatley, 1992; Morgan 1997; Brown and Eisenhardt 1998; Kelly and Allison 1999; Pascale, 1999) have used insights from complexity sciences to inform their work. Most of them, however, take models and analogies from the domain of the natural and other sciences and apply them uncritically and unreflectively to the human realm of organisational life. (All that is missing so far are titles such as 'The seven habits of highly effective complex adaptive systems' or 'How I learnt a few simple rules from complexity science and led my organisation to astonishing success' or 'The one-minute guide to complexity'). This application of ideas from complexity science, furthermore, is normally within, and therefore reinforces, the dominant organisational norms and paradigm of what Schon (1995) calls 'technical rationality'. They serve to perpetuate notions of control that if certain actions are followed then certain consequences will result. Ralph Stacey is one of the few to take seriously the challenge that complexity science offers to conventional, largely modernist ideas about the relationship between the individual and the organisation, leadership, predictability and control, uncertainty, and change. Appendix one elaborates further a critique of traditional ways of working with change and connects these to the assumptions of 'modernity'.

Influenced, therefore, by these ideas and by my association with their progenitors, I have, over the time this thesis encapsulates, in a variety of contexts, worked with self-organising processes in my practice. One important context illustrated in the previous chapter is working participatively with self-organisation on a Masters programme. Other contexts, that will be the focus of this chapter, are facilitating change as an organisational consultant.

One of the three key inquiry questions raised in my MPhil transfer paper was: *“How can I work more effectively with self-organising processes in groups to enable individual and organisational learning?”*

I will now explore this question by giving some illustrations from accounts of my practice that I have written and shown to others, of working with ‘self-organising emergence’. I will further comment briefly on what each of these illustrations conveys about the nature of working with change in this way.

Illustration one

This is taken from the first meeting with a group of five people from the Masters in People and Organisational development to design the second residential event for MSc 10. The first few lines of this have already been included in chapter six, but I repeat them here to give an overall sense of context.

“I had started the meeting by asking the design team members what they wanted to learn from their involvement in creating and delivering this residential. There was initially a rather cautious and inhibited atmosphere in response to this and one participant expressed resentment that she had to be involved in creating this residential when she was very busy. There was a danger of the residential being seen as a necessary chore rather than an exciting opportunity. As we talked about this, and I asked questions to surface the feelings people had about being involved with this, and tried not to react defensively (in either a self-justifying or aggressive manner) to the perception of the residential as a imposed burden, a shift began to happen in which the residential could genuinely be seen as a challenging and potentially creative opportunity. A key turning point was the realisation that the residential could nourish both the participants and the members of the design team. This was symbolised with the idea of the theme of the residential being ‘a gift to ourselves’. Once this theme began to be established, the whole atmosphere of the meeting changed and there was a flurry of creative ideas about how to organise a residential around this theme. What interested me was the way this subject emerged as an organising theme from the interaction we had, rather than being initially proposed by me or any one of the participants. Once it had emerged, it could become the theme around which each of us in the design team could act independently but with this theme and context in mind. It was the significance of this theme, as a unifying Gestalt which unpredictably and spontaneously emerged,

and to which we all felt committed, which ultimately gave, I think, the residential its coherence.”

In retrospect, it was important at this meeting for me to allow and pursue through inquiry the negative feelings about the task we had gathered to do. The risk in so doing was to build up a resentful and demotivated atmosphere. Yet by doing this, the conversation began to be self-organised around the theme of people feeling under pressure. As this theme emerged, it then also became possible for this to be transformed into a positive direction for the residential to move into. It is also significant here, as I indicate in this account, that both the theme and its transformation emerged spontaneously from our interaction – no one was ‘driving’ or intentionally facilitating this theme to appear. Therefore, when it emerged, no one felt special ownership of or resistance to it, yet all were committed to it, and it became a highly viable framework for joint action.

Illustration two

This is taken from the work I did with MSc 8 in February 2001, also referred to in the previous chapter. I had been asked to run a one-day workshop on facilitation and chose to run it in a way that, as well as simultaneously teaching facilitation skills, also took time to reflect at a meta-level on the way that I was facilitating the group moment-to-moment on the day. In other words, I wanted to utilise the ‘shared context’ (Rowland, 2000), as referred to in the previous chapter, to consciously make the participants’ experience of being facilitated part of the learning about facilitation. After the day, the following is part of the account I write to participants:

“My aim in working with you on the day was to set up the conditions in which an emergent order may arise – one that was co-created and jointly designed rather than a framework for the day that I had planned in advance and imposed upon you. I was intrigued (and pleased) that by the end of the day you had not even wanted to see the two frameworks I had planned in advance for the day.

I think the critical periods that a shared and emergent order happened were the interval before lunch and the time between 3pm and 3.30pm when we heard back from each group your ideas on how to proceed. It was during these times that we were engaged in deciding how to organise ourselves and, from which, order in the form of an agreed framework for the day could emerge.

In the first of these periods before lunch, in retrospect, I wondered if I was too active in shaping the subsequent activity. I am aware of the potential in these open-ended, ambiguous situations for people to become frustrated and that this frustration can be a disabling force for individual and organisational learning. To counter this, and to respond to what I interpreted as the need of a number of people in the group who were keen to move to action, I actively helped shape the next phase of activity which was to divide into small groups with a facilitator and come up with ideas for a framework for the afternoon. My concern about this was that this was one of the options I had previously created on my planned agenda for the day. So how much was this really an emergent co-created order and how much was this the more or less subtle exercise of my power in the role of facilitator to shape the day according to the agenda I had already formulated?

When the large group reconvened at 3pm I was agreeably surprised at the speed and ease with which we were able to hear back from the three small groups and then, from the many different ideas which arose, relatively quickly make a decision about how to proceed. I think it is worth reflecting on what enabled this to happen, because it certainly is not always my experience that such speed and ease of decision making is typical of a large group. What led to this? I think it was helped by my emphasising at the start of this period the overall time boundaries in which we were working and suggesting a specific time period for this decision making to occur in. I consciously adopted a more active and focussed, rather than reflective and open-ended style. It was further helped by the similarities and clear links between the material, which each group produced. I think V.'s initial comment (as I said at the time) was very facilitative through clearly summarising the overall commonalities in each of the three groups and suggesting a way to proceed which gave both structure and flexibility, allowing others to work within and fill out the framework she had outlined. And beyond this there was willingness in the group to build on and link with others' suggestions in a way that created a 'flow' within the group, to use an expression introduced earlier in the day. These would be my thoughts about how this was created and I'm sure you would each have your own perspective on what was significant in enabling this to happen.

By now I was reassured because what had been jointly created was richer, more complex, more engaging, and more multi-faceted than anything I had previously thought of on either of my two pre-planned frameworks."

In this illustration I am reflecting on the process of 'self-organising emergence' as it occurred with this group. I refer to the ambiguity, uncertainty and general messiness that this way of working can produce. This, then, can engender feelings of frustration, anxiety and impotence. The first time this happened, I made a judgement to be more interventionist and, as I indicate, take the group down a path that was partially pre-determined. At a later point in the day, I contrast this with an occasion where I believed self-organising emergence occurred. I note, too, that one of the features of this is its spontaneity and genuine novelty.

Illustration three

The following excerpt is from my reflections arising out of a conference I attended in May 2000 at an International management institute, which I will refer to as ABC.

"On the afternoon of the first day there was a session which looked at the work ABC was doing in five different organisational contexts. There were maybe about 40 people present at this session. The session was hosted by two people who asked someone involved in each of the different contexts to speak for a few minutes about the work they were doing in each of the different contexts. Having done this a procedure was introduced in which it was explained that people attending the session would have the opportunity to talk more about each of the projects they had heard outlined. Participants in this session were then given a number from one to five by one of the session leaders pointing to people and getting them to say their number. There was something alienating about this process. It raised some laughter and there were some humorous displays of resistance to this process, for example saying six after five rather than returning to one again. The aim of this number allocation was to divide the group into five smaller groups and give everyone the opportunity to attend a discussion with each of the people who had presented the five different projects. It was explained that this is what we would now do and that each small group would have a half an hour with each of the five projects.

This procedure struck me as embodying a number of conventional assumptions about organising and learning. First it was assumed that each person would want to spend equal time with each project and that each participant wanted to attend all the different project discussions. It also embodies principles of fairness and ensures that all the sessions should be attended. And it is a good idea to create different conversations in small groups rather than five sequential presentations. But it does

not allow for the group to self-organise around their own particular interests and for some conversations to develop longer than the time allocated for them. It also does not consider that some people might not have wanted to attend all sessions and may have been interested in attending only one or a few.

Interestingly what happened with this process was that it became increasingly difficult to manage in tune with the original intention. For a start the procedure of dividing the participants into five had some unexpected effects. I was part of a group of three and looking round the room there seemed to be groups of varying sizes. We were not all neatly divided into groups of equal sizes. After about half an hour we were encouraged to move and already by now groups seemed to be at different stages. Some moved immediately, others moved later. In the second group I was in, two people joined the discussion in the middle of the session. As we continued with trying to move groups every half-hour, as far as I could see, this neat structure of each group moving at regular pre-decided intervals was breaking down. At different stages people wanted to go and have coffee. Towards the end there seemed at one point only four groups operating. I think this was a result of more self-organising processes taking over - people choosing to stay longer in some discussions, not participating in others, getting involved in other conversations on the side over coffee. These self-organising processes were existing alongside the formal imposed structure as they do in organisations. To their credit, the people organising the session did not attempt to re-impose their structure on this process and tried to sensitively facilitate movement between groups more in participants' own time rather than at the dictates of their original structure.

At the end there was an attempt to pull the session together and ask what people had learnt. This was notable to me for its lack of energy. Of course people had learnt something from their conversations. But I think in these situations what is learnt is very specific and in the context of the discussion taking place earlier so when it is taken out of context and made more abstract much of its meaning is lost. There seemed to me a politeness in responding to the questions about overall learning. Some of the project presenters said they had found it valuable to be asked questions about their projects – one person described it as 'free consultancy'. After some pushing by the session leaders, others admitted that yes it was interesting to see how different designs of a similar approach had been developed to meet the needs of the five different situations. I was curious about the lack of energy at the end of this process and thought it was partly created by the restriction of the natural flow of the self-organising processes.

I thought that this situation could have been better handled by using some kind of 'Open Space' process where participants had the choice to decide which table they wanted to go to and how long they wanted to spend. What happened was that within an overall imposed structure, participants found ways of exercising this choice but that the imposed structure kept reappearing as an obstacle that had to be subverted in different ways.

Another session I would like to write about was a session called 'An Inquiry into inquiry', run by 'B.' an American consultant who is a senior affiliate at the MIT Centre for Organisational Learning. This session was held in a more informal environment than the session I have described earlier - a meeting room set out in a comfortable style positioned at the entrance to one of the accommodation wings. It was clear at the beginning that there were not enough chairs in the room. B. was very active and attentive to reorganising the room so that everyone could sit comfortably in a circle. In doing this, he made the comment "It's called self-organising – see if you can do it". This immediately struck me as a contradiction and that I was in a situation of imposed self-organisation. Or better, that organisation was going to be imposed on me but that this organisation would be given the name self-organisation so that it looks as if I (and others) are choosing it – clever, huh?

Early in the group B. said he wanted us to each find a question that was important to us, in fact its importance was such that answering this question would provide a significant breakthrough in our professional lives and lead to significant personal and professional transformation. He also commented that as we each asked our individual questions a pattern would emerge that would express the collective learning of the group, and that this knowledge will be created in the centre of the circle. Again I thought he is pre-empting genuine emergence – he is assuming an emergent whole can be guaranteed to arise, a universal theme which unites us all. And that this knowledge will arise in the centre rather than the periphery.

In the session people began to articulate their individual questions. These were undoubtedly heartfelt and meaningful to the individuals expressing them. B. occasionally suggested that there was a question underlying the initial question that was being asked. These underlying questions all tended to point to the fundamental existential question of 'what is the purpose of my life?'

And in fact this did seem to be the theme that emerged. What are we all here for? This was the emergent whole that was produced. But at this level of generality, I wonder about the value of the theme. It is a unifying theme, but also somehow strips the individual questions of their unique context, their particularity. The process does not allow for or encourage the possibility that there might not be an emergent overall theme or that there could be a number of divergent and contradictory sub themes; self organisation is presumed, is steered, is actively created and managed. The group does not really enter the potentially creative realm at the 'edge of chaos' where there is a real risk of disintegration and where everything feels as if it could fall apart.

At the end of the session most people commented very favourably on the session and the depth of the sharing that had taken place. I wonder about this. Can a group of twenty odd relative strangers achieve a genuine intimacy in this time? Or are we just learning and expressing a new rhetoric of 'consultant-speak', talking together in a group which has the appearance of depth but is really only skimming the surface?"

In this account I am thinking about self-organisation in the context of being a participant in two workshops. The account of the first workshop illustrates the co-existence of emerging forms of self-organisation alongside formally structured organising procedures. This is similar to the distinction Ralph Stacey (2000) makes between formal and informal organisational systems. What is revealing in this account is the persistence and power of these informal, spontaneously arising self-organising systems. Indeed, it is with the same characteristics of persistence, flexibility and decentred power that these informal self-organising processes operate in organisational life. The account of the second workshop largely speaks for itself. This, to me, is an example of ideas of self-organisation being co-opted into an instrumental pre-determined form of organising, which, it has to be said, is very popular (and reassuring).

Summary

So, what do these illustrations taken together and the accounts in chapter six and elsewhere tell me overall about my inquiry question? - *"How can I work more effectively with self-organising processes in groups to enable individual and organisational learning?"*

This question is difficult, if not impossible, to answer in the generality. A typical general response reduces the answer to a list of near banalities. For example, I could say: be more confident; be present in the moment; know when to lead and when to follow; listen well; ask good inquiry questions; engage in and promote dialogical conversations; be aware of, and enable others' awareness of, how situations are being socially constructed, maintained and transformed; be able to tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, and not knowing; be emotionally literate; be able to hold emotionally the discomfort, frustration and anxiety inevitably engendered in messy self-organising processes; make well-founded and well-timed interventions into group dynamics: have a good and wide repertoire of techniques and methods such as Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space, graphic facilitation, real time strategic change, future search etc.

Such a generalised list, whilst of some possible value, takes away the specifics of the particular person, situation and context. It is an example of what Toulmin (1990) describes as the replacement of the local, the particular, and the timely found in Renaissance humanism by the universal, the abstract and the timeless in the rise of modernist thought. (For a further exposition of Toulmin's work see appendix one). Rather than answer this inquiry question in the generality, I am aiming throughout this thesis to show through narrative accounts the emergence and evolution of my practice.

At the same time, over the period I have been engaged in my research practices, I do believe - without wanting to set up a 'victory narrative' (Lather, 1993) - that I have learnt to be more skilled in working with these processes. My main personal evidence for this is in the way that I have worked with MSc 10 and the levels of creativity, ownership and commitment generated. My aim and hope is that the accounts in chapter seven and in this chapter demonstrate this to the reader.

A further claim for increased proficiency in this area is concerned with my ability to work with networks. Complexity theory suggests that all living systems are composed of networks. In 'The Web of Life, Fritjof Capra (1997) says that the network is "the central metaphor of ecology" (p. 10). He adds, (and I detect here echoes of anti-foundationalist post-modern thinking that he would not necessarily subscribe to):

"In the new systems thinking, the metaphor of knowledge as a building is being replaced by that of the network. As we perceive reality as a network of relationships, our descriptions, too, form an interconnected network of concepts and models in which there are no foundations." (p. 39).

Patricia Shaw (2002) shows how organisations are created, sustained and changed through complex, interconnected conversational network-based processes. She argues that the role of what has been traditionally termed 'the change agent', is to enter into and, with awareness, or what John Heron and Peter Reason (2001) call 'critical subjectivity', fully participate in these conversational networks. This is with a view to both showing how patterns of meaning-making are perpetually being constructed through the normal everyday conversational activities within organisations and also enabling alternative forms of conversational sense-making to emerge. She follows Shotter (1993) in arguing that organisational reality is enacted through conversation. Therefore, if different conversations can be facilitated, different realities can be enacted.

This all points to the significance of understanding and working with networks to enable change. In the next section of this chapter, I will give examples of working with networks in three different contexts. What is important in each of these examples is that the starting point for change is the facilitation of evolving self-organising conversational networks, rather than a planned system-wide change initiative.

Section three: working with networks

Example one

The first example is a relatively small example of using conversational networks to create a learning group.

I had been working as a mentor with J., a chief executive in the social housing sector, for over two years. We both began to realise that our work could be more productive if the conversations we were having could be extended to a small group of chief executives in similar positions. Accordingly, J. had a conversation with P., the chief executive of an organisation, which acts as an umbrella organisation within the social housing sector. P. then emailed me a list of four names of chief executives from other organisations of a similar size and facing similar challenges to J.'s organisation. J. himself also suggested another person from an organisation out of the social housing sector but within the public sector. I then wrote to these five people outlining the rationale for a learning group and inviting them to an initial meeting at J.'s offices to discuss this further. All those invited bar two people attended. At this meeting I introduced further the idea of a learning group, spoke about its potential benefits, and asked the people present to respond to this. As people spoke, interest in the idea grew and we agreed to set up four

meetings over the course of a year. As the group so far was composed of five white men (including myself) one of the participants suggested inviting a female chief executive he knew. This idea was well received, and led to six of us, two months later, gathering together at the first meeting of this learning group in a hotel room near Wakefield.

For me, this was a novel way of generating work. I had, of course, initiated the work, together with J., but the final form of the work emerged in the conversations at J.'s offices. I also noticed that this way of working created different sets of relationships with the participants. I felt my relationships with them were more direct, more transparent, more equal, and more personal than in other working contexts. This was expressed for instance in the question of fees for the work where my initial fee structure was challenged and re-negotiated by the participants when another member joined the group.

Example two

In the autumn of 2000, I was asked by an English environmental organisation to work with one of their clients to help introduce sustainability into their organisation. Traditionally, this environmental organisation offered training programmes as a way of intervening in organisations but the chief executive knew something of the way that I worked, wanted to utilise a different approach, and judged that this approach would be suitable for this particular client.

I therefore met with the person responsible for helping the organisation develop more environmentally sustainable business practices. She explained the work that had already been undertaken within the business, which had consisted of a high profile training course on sustainability with a selected group of managers whose role now was to introduce and champion sustainability in their respective parts of the organisation. Together we came to a view that the next stage of work would be to support and develop those projects already in existence that were attempting to introduce sustainability into different business practices, and to foster the creation of new initiatives with the same purpose. My thinking, here, was to help develop a network of people engaged in promoting sustainability who could connect together, share their learning and practice, and support and challenge one another to realise their different projects. I thought that the creation of such a network might lead to unexpected emergent outcomes in terms of taking sustainability forward within the organisation. We agreed that we would create two action learning groups of five to six people in each as

one forum for this network. Other forums included the setting up of a sustainability web-site on the company intranet, lunchtime events with external speakers, and an annual exhibition of sustainability projects held in the main reception area. The action learning groups met regularly for nine months. After an evaluation of this first phase of work, we set up another two groups, which also met regularly for a period of a further nine months.

I do not intend to explore the detail of this work here. What I want to draw attention to is how my thinking about, and interest in, creating networks as a way of facilitating organisational change was shaping my practice. In this instance, I was interested in helping foster informal self-organising networks that would help bring issues of sustainability into the different parts of this organisation's business.

Example three

This is a recent example where I have been working to create an alumni group from the 150 or so participants from the eleven different cohorts of the MSc in People and Organisational Development at Roffey Park. I will briefly describe the stages of creating this alumni group

The idea of an alumni group had been mooted for a while but it achieved a new focus when in July of 2002 my colleagues and I organised a tenth anniversary celebration meeting for all the participants who had attended the MSc.

In the invitation to this event, people were also asked if they would be interested in helping think about the setting up of an alumni group. There was a favourable response to this and in June last year my colleague and I met with the group of people who had put themselves forward as being interested. We decided that we would test out some of the thoughts and ideas at the tenth anniversary meeting and agreed that each of the people present would help to facilitate a small group at the meeting asking them questions about the setting up of an alumni group. These small groups met at the anniversary event and their discussions were then fed into a further meeting of the people who had initially expressed interest. Out of this next meeting a decision was made to set up a conference in early 2003 to launch the alumni group. This would coincide with the opening of the new facilities at Roffey Park. I am currently working with a small group of self-selected alumni to cost, market, design and deliver this conference.

Again, I do not intend to go into all the details of this work here. The focus of the work is to create a genuinely self-organising network of alumni. The way this is being formed is to involve the alumni in a participative self-organising manner in the creation of this network. I have found myself both leading and facilitating this network into being. This does raise interesting issues. For example, who is in charge of the network? Is it Roffey Park as represented by my colleagues and me or is it the alumni? This is another paradox to which the answer is 'both at the same time'. That is, in the formation of the network, we are constantly negotiating and re-negotiating issues of power, authority and decision making. Actually resolving this paradox one way or another could lose the creative tension and vitality generated by the paradox. And my sense is that if the network is to be really vital and innovative, it needs to allow the emergence of authority and decision making from the participants without this being rigidly controlled through Roffey Park. The network needs to allow the existence of multiple agendas within it, even if some of these might be competing, for example, independent consultants using the network to market their services in competition with one another and Roffey Park. Again there is a further paradox at the heart of the network – the opposing dynamics of competition and co-operation, both at the same time. A large part of the skill required in working with this network is to accept the paradoxes embodied in it and not try to resolve or eliminate the contradictions.

Section four: reprise

In the previous section, I give three examples of discrete areas or projects of work with self-organising networks. I also want here to re-emphasise that this perspective of working with 'self-organising emergence' in which the individual is seen as embedded in, and both shaping and being shaped by, the networks they live and work in, permeates the entire thesis.

My aim throughout the thesis is to explore and illustrate the overall dialectic of "How do I and others create my practice and how does my practice shape me and influence others." I have also wanted to explore this in practice not just in theory by evolving distinctive and original (at least for me!) forms of practice called 'sharing my work with others', which arise from and become further interventions into the different networks or 'communities of practice' that I both constitute and am constituted by. Such interventions, as shown in chapter one, necessarily produce unexpected outcomes. This form of practice and the interventions occasioned have represented my own form of 'living systemic thinking' (Marshall, 2002).

Part Four

Chapter nine

Questions of epistemology and validity

“What is meant by ‘reality’? It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable – now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech – and then there it is again in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is.”

Virginia Woolf (1929)

“Social science that doesn’t break your heart just isn’t worth doing”

Ellis & Bochner (2000)

Section one: questions of epistemology

A questioning voice asks: “Why is epistemology important?”

A ‘critical-cynical voice’ responds: “Because in order to get your thesis you have to write a section on epistemology and show you know what you are doing here. Also, whilst we are talking about rules, real or imaginary internalisations, don’t you have to write the thesis all in one type face which rather scuppers this little experiment?”

A ‘scholarly voice’ takes up this challenge for most of the remainder of this section.

Epistemology is important here because I see this thesis as an example of what Schon (1995) calls an ‘epistemology of practice’, in contrast to traditional views on epistemology, with its norms of, in Schon’s words, “technical rationality”. Traditional epistemology possesses what Ken Gergen at the September 2002 ‘ninth approaches to emerging inquiry conference’ called the “commanding presence” of Cartesian-empirical-

positivistic thought. This has dominated western thinking since the mid-seventeenth century and is generally considered to establish the philosophical basis of modernism. Such an epistemology assumes that there is an objective world, knowledge of which can be progressively gained by empirically verifiable methods that guarantee truth and objectivity independent of the knower of it. This knowledge can be cast in the form of timeless general truths, independent of social, political, and personal context.

This worldview still provides what James Hillman (1996) once called the “mental furniture” that shapes and colours our thinking, and still actively dominates many fields. It is, however, under increasingly trenchant critique from many fronts. Calas & Smircich (1999), in a review of postmodern thinking in relation to organisational theory, refer to ‘modernist exhaustion’. This alludes to the idea that modernity has now run its three hundred or so year course. We are currently living in an era where the old ways of making sense of the world and legitimating knowledge that have guided inquiry for centuries are no longer seen to be unquestioningly valid but no agreed new forms or discourses have established themselves in a dominant position. Others speak about ‘paradigm proliferation’ and the ‘Balkanisation response’ (Donmoyer, 1996), ‘paradigm wars’ (Anderson and Herr, 1999) and the culture campus wars. Some key aspects of this critique of modernity have already been expounded in chapter three. At this point, it suffices to indicate the main sources of the critique from developments within science itself (quantum mechanics and complexity theory which fundamentally challenge notions of predictability, control and linear causation), and from the rich body of thinking generally referred to as post-modernism. This is characterised by, in Lyotard’s (1984) much quoted phrase, an ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’, an anti-foundationalist, anti-essentialist stance, analyses of discourses that demonstrate the inseparability of knowledge and power, and an insistence on the socially and historically conditioned nature of knowledge.

An epistemology of practice, in contrast to traditional epistemologies, suggests that truth is made not discovered. Smith and Deemer (2000), in a discussion about relativism, state that “we must change our imageries and metaphors from those of discovery and finding to those of constructing and making.” We do not learn more effectively about the world and create valid knowledge by standing back from it in a detached objective manner – and the further back the better and more valid the knowledge because of the increasing absence of bias. Instead, knowledge is created in active, participative engagement with the world, through different forms of individual and cultural practices. As Karl Marx said (1969), and later Marxists have emphasised, “ the

point is not to understand the world but to change it". This is also at the basis of Kurt Lewin's (1951) original formulation of action research – it is in trying to change social situations that we best come to understand them. Epistemologies of practice, therefore, emphasise the practical and ethical grounds for knowledge.

This view draws attention to the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, what Marxists call 'praxis', and the different kinds of knowledge created in this way (of which this thesis is an example), which contrast with the idea of knowledge existing apart from the practices that create it. As I have indicated in the chapter two, this is also encapsulated in Judi Marshalls' (1999) idea of 'living life as inquiry', Wenger and Lave's (1991) ideas of 'situated learning', and Wenger's (1998) notion of 'communities of practice' – our forms of knowledge are inseparable from the forms in which we live and engage in life. At its most radical this points too, as I also indicated in chapter two, to the inseparability of ontology and epistemology, a distinction which has been central to western philosophy since Descartes. It also profoundly connects epistemology and ethics. There are no morally neutral ways of knowing the world. All so-called 'data' and all observations are always theory-laden and all theory is grounded in values.

This 'epistemology of practice' opens the way to different ways of knowing in addition to the propositional forms of knowledge privileged by traditional epistemology. Polanyi's (1958) formulation of 'tacit knowing' as the basis of practical knowing, contrasted with 'explicit knowing', has been an influential concept, particularly in the field of organisational knowledge management. Likewise, Schon (1995) refers to the 'knowing-in-action' that practitioners use to guide and improvise their behaviour in circumstances of "uncertainty, complexity, uniqueness and conflict". John Heron (1992, 1996a) refers to four forms of knowing organised hierarchically: practical, propositional, presentational and experiential. Feminist scholars (Belenkey, Clinchy et al 1986) have argued that an emphasis on propositional forms of knowing discriminates against more intuitive, emotional, bodily based and experiential forms of knowing that have been traditionally associated with female characteristics. Tsoukas (Warwick Business School Research Paper 171, undated) writes about the limits of propositional knowledge, which then need to be complemented by narrative forms of knowing, when describing situations that are not regularised and describable in terms of rules.

Enough already! How many more references can you find to different forms of knowing? Where is this heading? Is this not the 'scholarly voice' getting carried away with itself?

Don't interrupt. I had not quite finished. There is a quote still to be included from Tsoukas that is important which, links to Ralph Stacey's (2000) ideas about the functioning of formal and informal organisation and connects to the theme of paradox in chapter seven of this thesis. Here it is;

"Propositional knowledge is intrinsically related to the institutional dimension of organised contexts, while narrative organisational knowledge is intrinsically related to the latter's practice dimension. The two pairs, however, are in conflict: for practices to endure they need to be sustained by institutions to whose corrosive influence they are inescapably exposed. At the same time, institutions cannot function unless they are supported by communal traditions" (p. 2)

Well why is that so important?

Because Tsoukas is drawing attention to narrative forms of knowledge. These forms have been illustrated in chapters four (in autobiographical accounts), seven (in accounts of my 'living educational theory'), and eight (in accounts of working with self-organising processes) of this thesis. He is also saying that propositional and narrative organisational knowledge knowing are in conflict, but also in a relationship of mutual dependence. You did after all want to interrupt me in the midst of a propositional flow.

Oh no not again! More tediously and tortuously clever self-referential stuff, commenting on the way the text is being constructed to make the very point contained in the text, what those post modernists would dignify with the term 'reflexivity'. And, incidentally, I think this can be so much better done in film. Witness, for example, the recent film 'Adaptation', which is cleverly constructed as a film about a scriptwriter struggling to write a film about an unfilmable book and the myriad ways the scriptwriter is implicated in the eventual film.'

Actually I do think 'reflexivity' is important. But you'll have to wait for the discussion on validity in the next sections for that.

You still have not completely convinced me of the relevance of all this epistemological speculation.

By critiquing the tendency to try to create 'grand' or 'meta-narratives', valid across time and place, postmodern thinking ushers in the possibility of validating different kinds of

epistemology and knowing. These are more based, as Toulmin (1990) says on the local, the timebound, the particular, the oral and the concrete. Postmodern thought emphasises the significance of narrative and opens up options for diverse forms of representation of knowledge, what John Heron calls 'presentational knowing'. Calas and Smirich (1999) understand the implications of this as follows.

"Some of what this entails is for authors to specify the aspects of the world with which they are trying to engage and why; to situate knowledge and to de-reify it; to speak in a way that takes ownership of their arguments; and be accountable for the choices made" (p. 650).

That is exactly what I have aimed to do in this thesis.

Section two: questions of validity

This next section will be in four parts. First, I want to discuss the impact on ideas of validity occasioned by the 'postmodern' turn in recent thought of the last thirty years or so. Then I want to look at other ideas of validity emanating from educational action research, self-study research and autobiographical writing. The third part will move on to explore the implications of the first two parts for my thesis and, by linking with my 'living educational theory' created in chapter seven, suggest suitable criteria of validity for my own work. Finally, the fourth part will consider validity from the point of view of formal academic criteria laid down to assess a PhD.

Part one

In the earlier section of this chapter, and more fully in chapter three, I have been arguing that the poststructural, postmodern and deconstructionist critique of the traditions that have shaped western thinking particularly since the enlightenment have led to a profound questioning and reassessment of the pre-eminence of scientific reasoning and methods alongside the way that such reasoning has defined notions of truth, knowledge, reason, objectivity and progress. As MacLure (1995) says;

"Think of postmodernism as a kind of undoing of all the habits of mind of so-called western thought that have prevailed over the last two centuries –the decidability of truth, the inevitability of progress, the triumph of reason, the possibility of a universal moral code, the objectivity of science, the forward march of history, the

existence of the singular autonomous self. These foundational principles are all to do with making the world knowable, accountable, unambiguous, generalisable, predictable, coherent, manageable, mutually comprehensible." (p. 106)

Similarly, Ken Gergen (1991), writing about the current turmoil in the American academic community in the preface to *'The Saturated Self'*, says:

"Virtually all the assumptions guiding both reason and research over the past century are coming under sharp question." (p. ix)

Likewise Donmoyer (1996), writing about the difficulties of stepping into the editorship of a prestigious journal in the field of educational research and his role in influencing what qualifies as valid research, states:

"There is little consensus in the field about what research is and what scholarly discourse should look like" (p. 19)

Winter (1998a), too, points out that this radical questioning of the grounds for knowledge is not purely of academic concern. As he says;

"If the legitimization of knowledge is open to question, where shall we, as professional workers charged with authority, seek the necessary basis for exercising our responsibilities." (p. 55)

One major consequence of all this is what Ken Gergen (1999) and Denzin (1997) call the 'legitimation crisis'. If traditional ideas of the basis of what is to be counted as valid knowledge no longer apply, and science is no longer the absolute authority whose standards and epistemological modus operandi other disciplines have to emulate and aspire to, then by what authority, means and criteria is knowledge in all domains to be judged? How can we say, for example, to echo a relatively recent debate in literary criticism, that Keats is a better poet than Bob Dylan? Or, more pertinently, by what standards are we to judge this thesis?

Ken Gergen (1999) suggests that there are two broad emotional responses to this undoing of the overarching claims to truth and knowledge that any meta-narrative, whether scientific, psychological, religious or political, has offered. One leads to the vertiginous despair and 'dark night of the soul' caused by peering or falling into, what Maclure (1996) describes as "the abyss that threatens to engulf all appeals to coherence,

wholeness, foundations and cores". This 'abyss' is the profoundly disorienting experience of the groundlessness caused by the deconstruction of any claim to establish transcendental universal foundations for truth and morality. This can lead to moral relativism, the sense that, therefore, anything goes, and potentially conclude in cynicism and/or nihilism. As Yeats (1924) says, from his poem, 'The Second Coming'.

"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

The other response is a playful celebration of the ambiguity, fragmentation, diversity, complex pluralism, and the new possibilities ushered in by a view which does not privilege and give overriding authority to any one perspective on truth, the good, and the beautiful. This is the 'invitation to the carnival', described by Gardiner (1992) as "Bahktin's term for a bewildering constellation of rituals, games, symbols, and various excesses which together constitute an alternative social space of freedom, abundance and equality." This latter response is also politically significant because it allows equal status to voices that have traditionally been marginalised because of gender, ethnicity or other refusals to conform to mainstream, accepted 'meta-narratives'.

Although the writing in the previous paragraphs outlines an impersonal exposition of Ken Gergen's two responses, my thesis, also, in representing and accounting for my inquiry practice over the last six years, contains highly personal accounts of both of these responses. The second part of my autobiography in chapter five describes the unravelling of the psychological 'meta-narrative' and set of relationships which sustained it that had been at the foundation of my life for ten years. The more optimistic response is shown too - to some extent this whole thesis is, at its most upbeat, a celebration and attempt to give a multi-voiced form to the complexity, diversity, uncertainty and fragmented nature of my own practice. I have struggled to resist being defined in uni-dimensional terms as primarily a facilitator, or an educator, or a developer, or a therapist, or a consultant. My practice encompasses all these.

The 'crisis of legitimation' that is at the heart of the exploration of validity in this section is further summed up in Denzin's (1997) question "What do we do with validity and the legitimation question once we've met critical poststructuralism?" One response to this is to attempt to develop different criteria of validity from within poststructural and postmodern thinking. From my reading of different discussions of validity in a postmodern context, Lather (1986, 1993) emerges as a significant figure.

Lather (1986) initially coined the concept of ‘catalytic validity’ to describe the emancipatory potential of any research. This was an attempt to rethink the political dimension of any research – rather than going along with modernist ideas of neutrality as an ideal to be attained, this criteria makes explicit the unavoidably ideological nature of research and judges that research according to its capacity to liberate people. In a later work (1994), Lather argues against any singular notion of validity and reframes validity as “multiple, partial, endlessly deferred.” Under the broad category of “transgressive validity”, she develops four new forms of validity: ironic, paralogical, Derridean rigour/rhizomatic, and voluptuous. Interestingly, and possibly even ironically, I found some of her discussion of these terms too rooted in the particular specialised discourses of postmodernism and too immersed in the esoteric ‘language games’ of a particular academic community to carry sufficient meaning and, therefore, validity for my own purposes. All of Lather’s four criteria seem related to the capacity of a text to create multiple representations, to undermine itself, to refuse to appeal to authorities (especially patriarchal) outside of the text, to resist linearity, consensus, closure and resolution, to allow for complexity and to resist assimilation of the ‘other’. She makes an interesting point in elaborating ‘ironic validity’. in saying that;

“ A strategy of ironic validity proliferates forms, recognising that they are rhetorical and without foundation, post-epistemic, lacking in epistemological support. The text is resituated as a representation of its “failure to represent what it points towards but can never reach” (Hayles, 1990, p 261), an ironic representation of neither the thing itself nor a representation of the thing, but a simulacrum” (p. 677).

I like this idea of Hayles (1990) of the text failing to “represent what it points towards but can never reach”. As I have written this thesis, I have increasingly seen it as a continual circling around, almost a meditation in writing on, and a criss-crossing of, the themes of my practice, aided by and in association with others’ ideas and comments, experimenting with different forms and genres, that can never reach final conclusions and that simultaneously tries and fails definitively to indicate what its ultimate purpose is.

Lather (1993) also makes a point about rhizomatic validity that relates to the above sense of my thesis. She says that “rather than a linear progress, rhizomatics is a journey among intersections, nodes, and regionalisations through a multi-centred complexity”. This thesis attempts to realise a ‘multi-centred complexity.’ Each of the previous chapters have been organised around a distinct theme, yet the themes of each chapter

are interconnected, and much of the content is cross-referenced. Creating this has posed the not inconsiderable challenge of how to write a sustained non-linear thesis in the face of legitimate demands for the quality of argument to be flowing, make sense and develop in some progressive fashion to create an overall coherence. It seems to me that even the most sophisticated and deconstructive postmodern writing is reluctant to dispense altogether with an internally consistent, high quality argument.

Smeurich (1996), also writing within a poststructural tradition, questions the whole concept of validity itself, rather than, like Lather (1993) and Mishler (1990), looking for different criteria to validate postpositivist research. He states that “the essential meaning of validity came to be, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) correctly surmised, the warrant of trustworthiness.” He goes on then to argue that the function of validity is a policing role, which draws a boundary that divides good and bad research. Instead of attempting to redraw the boundary, Smeurich states that:

“ My contention, then, is that the various kinds of validity, across both conventional and postpositivist paradigms are a civilisational project, an imperial project. Wearing many different masks, validity is a social practice drawn from the heart of Western darkness. It is an either/or bifurcation line that divides the privileged Same from the yet untheorised Other, that establishes the “valid” domination of the Same over the other, that delineates the conditions under which the Other can be validly incorporated into the same” (p. 55).

Smeurich, though, is reluctant to dispose of validity completely. He is searching for what he calls ‘new imaginaries of validity’ that do not express the dualisms of western epistemological thinking and are able to be genuinely appreciative and respectful rather than assimilating and colonising of ‘the Other’. Although he sees possible examples of these in White’s (1991) notion of an epistemology of “attentive care” and Lather’s (1993) overall category of “transgressive validity” used to describe her four forms of validity, he is still suspicious of how deeply entrenched the western “civilisational project” is preconceptually embedded in all patterns of thinking and action, including even these attempts to create alternative forms of validity.

Smeurich’s views are interesting here as they attempt to reposition the idea of validity and also convey similar points that Clark (2002) makes about Heidegger’s thinking. Clark describes the impetus of Heideggerian thought as an attack on the “absolutism of modernity’s drive to know” which has been the deeply rooted basis of the whole of

western thought since the Greeks. For Heidegger, technologically and scientifically inspired, instrumental modes of knowing focussed on explanation have become, especially in contemporary society, simultaneously modes of domination and control over both people and nature. Heidegger's response to this was to turn to art and poetry, especially that of Holderlin, (whose poem inaugurates this thesis), as alternative forms of knowing.

This question of the basis of knowing, the dominance and privileging of instrumental reason, and the marginalisation of other forms of knowing returns the argument back to the first section of this chapter. In exploring this issue here, I am opening up the possibility that my thesis, as the account of my practice over the last six years is not founded or structured as an explanatory account. I am not claiming that because I did such and such at one point then such and such ensued, to re-create the "If, then" logic of propositional knowledge (Tsoukas, undated research paper). I am not intending out of this thesis to build the much beloved 'tool box' of instrumental management and organisational development, or the 'ten best tips to changing organisations' approach. Rather the question will be whether I can create a sense of space within the thesis that is open to and suggests mystery, in which a 'sense of Other' is present. Alternatively, does my thesis assimilate all the material to a drive to know, what hooks (1992) calls "Eating the Other" and Nietzsche (1973) describes as 'the will to power'?

Part two

Having explored validity in relation to aspects of poststructural and postmodern thought, I want to first go on to look at some other general criteria that have been developed to assess validity in relation to educational research, self study research and autobiographical writing. In the third part of this section on validity, I will draw on both on the first two parts of this section and chapter seven on 'creating my living educational theory' to develop the criteria of validity that I want to be used to judge my thesis.

In their article about 'The New Paradigm Wars', Anderson and Herr (1999) ask three pertinent questions with regard to what they call "practitioner research", (of which this thesis would be an example);

"If we can't use current validity criteria to evaluate practitioner research, how do we evaluate it? How do we distinguish 'good' practitioner research from "bad" research? Perhaps most, importantly, who should develop these criteria?" (p. 15.).

They equate validity with rigor and offer five criteria for validity based on their own practitioner research, their work with others' research, and their interaction with others' ideas. One of these criteria is Lather's (1986) notion of 'catalytic validity', which has already been discussed. The others are outcome validity, process validity, democratic validity and dialogic validity.

Outcome validity is defined as "the extent to which actions occur which lead to a resolution of the problem that led to the study", and that, "outcome validity is synonymous with the "successful" outcome of the research project." I find this idea problematic. It only appears to validate 'victory narratives.' It also seems to be overly situated in the instrumental problem-solving way of thinking that I explored at the end of the first part of this section. This thesis explores many possible dimensions of success and failure. As already stated in chapter two, if my overall intended research outcome was to end my sleeplessness once and for all, then clearly the thesis is a failure. If, on the other hand, it was to develop a more disciplined practice as a runner, then, following my recent completion of a half-marathon, I could claim success. If my ultimate outcome was to have a more fulfilled life, then on what and whose criteria will that be judged? The counter argument would be that the thesis is deficient in not defining sufficiently rigorously its desired outcomes. Yet this counter argument is still located in an overly mechanistic paradigm, which assumes that it is possible to trace outcomes to causes in a simple, linear cause and effect manner. If, as I am claiming, that this thesis is an example of "living life as inquiry" then the outcomes from this approach cannot so unambiguously and neatly be defined.

Moreover, as Anderson and Herr point out themselves, 'outcome validity' begs the question as to whose outcome is success defined for. Also they say that, in most action research over time, as indeed happened in my own inquiry, the initial problem is re-framed in a more complex way, so that the initial problem and its associated outcome resolutions become less significant. This all makes 'outcome validity' problematic. In fact Winter (1998a) says, when discussing valid criteria for action research, that, "realistic and usable criteria are 'procedural', (concerned with following a justifiable process), rather than 'teleological' (concerned with achieving correct outcomes)." (p. 62)

Anderson and Herr say that process validity "asks to what extent problems are framed and solved in a manner that permits ongoing learning of the individual or system." This issue of ongoing learning is certainly an important measure of the validity of this thesis.

In fact, the theme of learning - mine and others - is one of, in Lather's (1993) words, the "multiple centres" of the thesis, and will form the basis of one of the criteria of validity to be developed in the third part of this section.

Democratic validity is defined as "the extent to which research is done in collaboration with all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation." Again this still situates research as addressing problems. If multiple aspects of my living practice are the 'problems' under investigation, then building collaboration, as I have found, is not easy or straightforward. Some people have refused collaboration yet I have still decided to include this aspect of my research in this thesis. Much of the practice I have evolved has been the attempt to create collaboration through circulating accounts of my work. In some situations, particularly as described in chapter seven, the research question itself and purpose of the work has been about building collaboration and it has not, therefore, been possible to achieve this at the onset of the research. I do agree, however, that this issue of collaboration is crucial, as was explored particularly in chapter seven.

Finally, dialogical validity is related to the process of peer review in traditional academic settings. In practitioner research, peer review is provided by participation in practitioner research communities. For me, this has occurred through my participation in the CARPP community, especially the supervision group I have been a member of. It has also an important part of the latter phase of my inquiry practice, which involved circulating my draft thesis to others in the various communities I have already cited, and responding to their comments as outlined in the introduction.

Herr and Anderson refer to the point of view of Torbert (1981) and Carr & Kemmis (1986) who insist that, in order to promote democratic and dialogic validity, practitioner research must be done as collaborative inquiry. My claim is that, regarding my own form of practitioner research, I am evolving a unique form of collaborative research based around a view of myself and my practice being located and mutually created in the network of relationships that sustain my life and its practices. By circulating my work to others, I am constantly testing and refining the democratic and dialogical validity of my work.

In their article, Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) are concerned with similar issues of validity regarding self-study educational research. They are initially concerned with the question of "when does self-study become research?" This is similar to the question I asked in the 'action research' section of chapter two about the difference between simply living life

and “living life as inquiry”. Their answer to this question is to follow the work of Wright Mills (1959) in saying that:

“When biography and history are joined, when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have a relationship to and bearing on the content and ethos of a time, then self-study moves to research.” (p. 15).

In my autobiographical writings in chapter five, I have attempted to situate my own biography within wider social and political movements. From the very start of the first autobiographical writing, ‘My first twenty-one years’, I include a reference to ‘Marlborough Man’ in the year of my birth. My writings also, more significantly, encompass reflection, (as far as the libel laws allow me), on the key events described in ‘My second twenty-one years’ as an illustration of a more general phenomenon characteristic of groups and communities at that time.

Bullough and Pinnegar continue to say that self-study;

“does not focus on the self per se but on the space between self and the practice engaged in. There is always a tension between those two elements, self and the arena of practice, between self in relation to practice and the others who share the practice setting. Each self-study researcher must negotiate that balance, but it must be a balance - tipping too far toward the self side produces solipsism or a confessional, and tipping too far the other way turns self-study into traditional research.” (p. 15).

It is what Bullough and Pinnegar call the ‘space between self and practice’ and what I would rather frame as the dialectic of self and practice that this thesis is concerned with. I am, moreover, trying, in the thesis - at its most radical - not to make the dualistic separation of self and practice that I think Bullough and Pinnegar retain but, instead, to consider the view that self and practice are a co-created dialectical unity, both in theory (chapters three and six), and in practice (chapters seven and eight) by exploring what this means as an action research activity.

Bullough and Pinnegar equate validity with quality and ask a further question that is relevant to this discussion of validity, especially as it will, in part three, move on to explore criteria of validity pertinent to this thesis. Their question is; “What makes a self-study worth reading?” They go on to develop nine guidelines for establishing quality in autobiographical self-study forms and a further five criteria for quality in

correspondence, e-mail, and recorded conversations. These nine guidelines for autobiography in educational research that they believe “point towards virtuosity in scholarship” are best summarised in their own words.

“A self-study is a good read, attends to the ‘nodal moments’ of teaching and being a teacher educator and thereby enables reader insight or understanding into self, reveals a lively conscience and balanced sense of self-importance, tells a recognisable teacher or teacher educator story, portrays character development in the face of serious issues within a complex setting, gives place to the dynamic struggle of living life whole, and offers new perspectives” (p. 19).

Whilst I find the formulation of Bullough and Pinnegar’s nine guidelines helpful in thinking about the issue of quality in autobiographical writing, I also think some of them repetitive and overlapping. They do not, too, obviate the need to make judgement. It is quite possible that one person reading my autobiographical writings will find them engaging, full of insight, and thoughtfully set in a broader social and cultural context; another may find them pretentious, self-indulgent and shallow.

Bleakley (2000) also considers autobiographical writing. In his thought provoking article, he is critical of the personal confessional style of much contemporary autobiographical writing. Whilst he generally welcomes the emphasis on more narrative forms of knowing in contrast to what he calls ‘logico-scientific knowing’, he is concerned about the dominant confessional style these forms are taking. He sees such a style as unreflectively producing ‘subjectivities’ based on critically unexamined ideas of authenticity and other naive assumptions from humanistic psychology. Chapter three explored the ways in which the popularity of such writing is one of many manifestations of a contemporary culture emphasising psychological growth and development that potentially well serve the interests of consumer capitalism. At this point, I want to look at the parts of Bleakley’s arguments that are relevant for this exploration of validity. Bleakley follows poststructural criticism in opposing the normal humanistic assumption that we write to express our unique authentic selves and our deepest feelings in language. Rather, he argues it is language and the different genres that we use that constitute us, “where identities are constructed through confessional modes rather than confessional modes revealing identities” (p. 16.)

From this standpoint, Bleakley offers the following criticisms of this kind of writing.

"Such writing is, first, monological rather than dialogical, caught in a wash-and-spin cycle of interminable introspection based (unreflexively) upon self-examination as an idealistic cleansing and purging.....Second, such writing is characteristically instrumentalised, as an extended curriculum vitae. Third it is often trivialised, or superficial, as an anecdotal account mistaking event for experience. Fourth, it is often cathartic but without insight, leading to a fascination with feelings and sentimentality. And fifth, it is characteristically inflated, or narcissistic, returning us to a monologic bias" (p. 20).

Given this, Bleakley, asks:

"Can we then have a narrative writing as reflective practice without a totalising 'subject' or authorial ownership? This would constitute an approach that appreciates the value especially of written language's inherent indeterminacy, and thus resists or subverts notions of closure, as explanation, in reflective practice" (p. 15).

As well as being able to embody this kind of indeterminacy, the other criteria that Bleakley concludes are important for narratives is that they "need to be interesting, they need to have aesthetic depth, as well as ethical focus" (p. 23).

Part three

The discussion so far has largely been about attempts to find general criteria of validity that are able to withstand the postmodern onslaught on traditional ideas of truth and validity. At the same time, the thrust of postmodern thinking is to suggest that there cannot be any universal criteria of validity, independent of the context of their production. Calas and Smirich (1998) refer to Lyotard's proposition that "legitimate knowledge under postmodern conditions can only reside in 'petits recits'. Knowledge can only be produced in 'small stories' or 'modest narratives', mindful of their locality in space and time and capable of adapting or disappearing as needed" (p. 651). Ken Gergen made a similar point in his talk at the 'ninth emerging approaches to inquiry' conference in September 2002 by saying that practices of truth can only be validated within the particular community and its 'language games'. In his memorable words, "truth is a local practice".

Rather than, therefore, using solely externally generated criteria of validity from any of the authors cited in the previous part of this section to judge my thesis, the challenge is for my writing to generate, substantiate and argue for its own criteria that are valid for what it is trying to do and the 'community of practice' in which it is located. This raises one obvious issue. Communities are not so sharply differentiated, with their defined set of practices clearly demarcated from one another. People belong to multiple communities. This thesis is positioned within the broad community of action researchers, but this community has many diverse streams to it and differing views, as already evidenced, as to what constitutes worthwhile and valid research. There is, therefore, no immediate, clearly bounded community, which I can turn to for their local criteria of validity. For example, do I locate this thesis as primarily first person research as Reason and Bradbury (2001) define it; or as an example of Whitehead's (1993) 'living educational theory' within the field of self-study educational action research; as an instance of 'interpretive ethnography' (Denzin, 1997); or as a contribution to the field of organisational development in working with self-organising processes from a complexity standpoint? My aim is that this thesis should not be located solely in any one of these traditions as it refers to my practice, which operates across these boundaries.

At this point, in order to help create my own criteria of validity, I want to return to the arguments of chapter seven. In that chapter, following Jack Whitehead's work (1993) I created my own 'living educational theory' by exploring what values were important to me as they had emerged, both from the autobiographical accounts in chapter five, and as I found them embodied in my practice as an educator on a postgraduate programme (chapter seven). On page 215, these values are summarised as: imagination, co-creation, relationship, multiplicity, transparency, openness, critical engagement, reflection and emancipation. These values were further realised in the intentions I outlined at the point of starting a new Masters programme in December 2001 (pages 213-215). These values permeate this thesis, at least in the scholarly, autobiographical and reflexive narrative voices, even if the critical/cynical voice does his best to subvert them.

Jack Whitehead argues that these values are embodied in our practice. They are not abstract, linguistic entities. At the same time as we try to more fully realise our values through experiencing their negation in our practice, simultaneously these values also become the living standards by which we make judgements about the worth of our work. Ontological values, thereby, become epistemological standards.

These values are further elaborated at the end of chapter seven into a living educational theory as a set of inquiry questions, which, I will re-state here as a set of paradoxical value-based principles underpinning my practice.

- Using my authority in the most influential way to encourage and enable others to find their authority and become self-managing.
- Contributing my knowledge, skills and talents fully to a programme and at the same time co-creating the programme with the participants.
- Fully participating and retaining my 'critical subjectivity'.
- Acting fairly and 'even-handedly' to all participants in the midst of a range of emotional responses to different individuals.
- Inspiring people and demonstrating that education and learning are more than gaining a qualification and/or functional means to an end and/or the acquisition of knowledge-based tool kits whilst recognising that people want and need qualifications and also believe and feel they need tools in order to do their jobs.
- Creating an environment that engages peoples' imagination and touches their souls without this becoming another series of recipes and techniques for engineering creativity.
- Challenging the status quo and existing entrenched patterns of thinking and dominant power relations whilst working within current organisational and institutional frameworks.
- Leading and facilitating self-organising processes.

I, therefore, want to draw on the above values and principles, through connecting them to the exploration of ideas already set out in this section, to suggest the following eleven criteria which I will use to judge the quality of this thesis and have encouraged others to judge it by.

1) Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness has long been considered an essential feature of valid research. The starting point here - notwithstanding Bleakley's (2000) thoughtful critique of notions of authenticity - is linked to whether the reader believes the accounts in the thesis are authentic and believable. I have tried to make the accounts as open, honest and transparent as I can. The issue for the reader is whether the accounts ring true. Are they consistent with what the reader knows of me and my life? Is the reader persuaded by the veracity and authenticity of the writing?

In relation to this criteria, Patricia Shaw, my ex-wife, commented in a letter dated 17 January 2003 on my draft:

"Is it trustworthy? As someone who has known you intimately for years it rings very true. It reads as honest, frank, riveting."

2) Engaging and interesting

Many of the authors in the previous part of this section naturally make one test of validity for narrative based accounts as to whether they tell a good story. My intention for this thesis is to engage and sustain the reader's attention, to stir the reader intellectually and emotionally, to create a lively, 'good read'. I want the writing and the reading of the thesis to have a sense of unpredictable vitality as it takes its own course. I want the thesis to generate learning for the author and reader in the midst of its production rather than being wearily predictable, stale, following pre-plotted routes and conventions, presenting already well-digested material. As Bleakley (2000) says, in relation to ideas, does the thesis "prowl like an animal, bite back, die on you, grab your attention or walk away" (p. 12)? (If the thesis were an animal what kind of animal would it be?)

In other words, the thesis should activate the reader's imagination and be what Ellis and Bochner (2000) call an "evocative narrative." Its aims are, in their words to:

"... activate subjectivity and compel emotional response...long to be used rather than analysed; to be told and retold rather than theorised and settled; to offer lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions; and to substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted facts" (p. 744).

In relation to this criteria, Valerie Garrow commented on my draft in an email dated 7 March 2003:

"I couldn't have ever imagined being 'gripped' by a PhD thesis (except my own perhaps) but I really did find myself absorbed in your work."

Professor Ralph Stacey wrote in an email dated 31st January 2003:

"I think it is interesting and easy to read which cannot be said about many PhD theses."

3) That the socially constructed nature of the self is apparent

This point here is to claim that the thesis is not overly self-referential and self-indulgent and that the autobiographical and other writings move beyond narcissistic confession and solipsistic introspection to show the wider social and cultural context of self-creation. To refer back to Mills' point (1959), autobiography, culture and history need to be joined

4) Connection to others

As Ellis and Bochner (2000) say about 'evocative narratives':

"The usefulness of these stories is their capacity to inspire conversation from the point of view of the readers, who enter from the perspective of their own lives. The narrative rises or falls on its capacity to provoke readers to broaden their horizons, reflect critically on their own experience, enter empathetically into worlds of experience different from their own, and actively engage in dialogue regarding the social and moral implications of the different perspectives and standpoints they encounter" (p. 748).

My intention here is that the reader is stimulated to think about and make connections with their own life and practice and that the thesis opens out to others in the way that Simon (1996) refers to in her exposition of the paradox of how a case study in focussing on the particular can illuminate the general.

Bassey (1995) says that: "A singularity is a set of anecdotes about particular events occurring within a stated boundary, which are subjected to systematic and critical search

for some truth.” This thesis, as an example of a ‘singularity’, claims to reach the truth that Bassey says “while pertaining to the inside of the boundary, may stimulate thinking about similar situations elsewhere.” (p. 111).

Throughout the thesis there have been many quotes where people have commented on the ability of my writing to evoke incidents and issues in their lives. Valerie Garrow commented:

“I made endless connections with my own life - particularly of similar experiences working in a 'community' and experiences as a social worker in Paris when I left University.”

5) Generates learning for the reader

This and the previous criteria are concerned with relationship to others and the ability of the thesis to co-create learning through its interaction with others .

Given my overall thinking about the thesis as a continuing intervention into the network of relationships that form the different communities of practice I am engaged in, it is important that the thesis has an effect on the reader’s practice and life, and that it generates further exploration and conversation. I have evidenced this process throughout the thesis and particularly in chapter seven.

6) Aesthetic depth

This is one of the dimensions suggested by Bleakley (2000). He complains, rightfully in my view, that “much academic writing in education can be said to lack body and image” (P. 12). This criteria means that the overall form of the thesis is aesthetically satisfying, and that there is congruence between its form and content. This criteria is further related to the second of the inquiry questions that grew out of my MPhil transfer paper, namely: “how can I work with individuals and organisations in a way which makes fuller use of my and their creative imagination?” Again I am emphasising the value of imagination here and being able to engage with the reader’s imagination as well as their intellect and emotions.

7) Resists overall explanation and tidy closure

This criteria combines the earlier discussion of Heidegger’s critique of instrumental modes of knowing, with Bleakley’s (2000) point about writing needing to express the

indeterminacy and ambiguity of language and the value-based principle of my 'living educational theory' that education is more than the instrumental acquisition of knowledge, skills and qualifications.

This also requires that the thesis is open to multiple meanings and interpretations. In the introduction, I show how the draft thesis generated a range of responses in terms of a range of meanings that were evoked. It also requires that the thesis retains a sense of mystery – not everything is explained.

In relation to this and the previous three criteria, Patricia Shaw commented:

"I make connections to my own life and work, am stimulated to start inquiring again into aspects of my experience, I cannot make a tidy closure and 'explain' the thrust of the work but it has an aesthetic form that I am irresistibly moved by."

8) Non-linearity

This is akin to Lather's (1993) notion of 'rhizomatic validity' and is linked to the previous criteria. (Actually it would be self-contradictory if it were not connected to other criteria!) This requires the thesis to read as if it has multiple inter-connecting centres and to represent a de-centred, inter-related network of ideas, emotions, impressions, and accounts in which no one overriding idea or theory dominates.

The method of using different voices that are equally weighted and valued aims to decentre the thesis and move it away from a traditional academic form in which one voice is privileged.

9) Reflexivity

This arises from the critical examination of the nature of knowledge in postmodern times and is linked to the value I place on reflection and critical engagement. The point here is that the thesis shows an awareness of its own constructed and contingent nature, that it is able to critically reflect upon itself, and that it understands its own framing as one of many possible interpretations.

10) Sound quality of the argument

Despite the arguments and openings for tension, contradiction, diversity, multiple epistemologies, poly-vocality, uncertainty, non-linearity, ambiguity, fragmentation and different representational forms born from the postmodern critique of traditional epistemology and propositional knowledge, there is still a requirement, and this links both to aesthetic depth and criticality of mind, that the thesis shows a high quality of thinking and rigorous argumentation. Not anything goes.

11) Ethical

There are a number of dimensions to this criteria. The purposes for which the thesis is written need to be judged to be worthwhile i.e. that it has been worth doing and contributed to some good. This is Bleakley's (2000) point, that the thesis has an 'ethical focus'. This requires that people been treated ethically in the course of the research inquiries.

It also raise the issues of what kind of person has the writing shaped me into being, what is the effect of the writings on others and what are the consequences and new possibilities of the different writings and inquiry practices in the thesis. This connects to the value I place on emancipation and lead me to want the consequences for me and others to be liberating and therapeutic in their broadest sense.

Part four

This thesis is also constituted within an institutional context, which has its own rules of judgement. It is not solely for me to decide the criteria by which this work will be considered to have sufficient merit to qualify for a doctorate. For a PhD, the two primary criteria are that the thesis needs to show 'originality of mind' and 'critical judgement'.

Regarding 'originality of mind', I will claim that the thesis shows three main dimensions of originality. Firstly, I think the form of practice evolved, described and summarised as 'showing my work to others' demonstrates an original approach to the creation of the thesis, by embedding it within the communities of practice to which it refers. This is an attempt to make the thesis a living document, a continuing intervention to generate further learning for others and myself, not simply a report at one step removed from

the practice it is referring to. It is in this bringing together of the ideas of the self and the three-fold reciprocal shaping of self, world and practice that inform this thesis together with a practice that embodies those ideas where my initial claim to originality lies.

Secondly, I think the thesis has an original form in bringing and linking together the different voices and genres of traditional academic writing, autobiographical writing, accounts of my practice, alongside experimentation with other genres such as dialogical forms, the creation of a web-site and email correspondence.

Thirdly, I think some of the thinking in the thesis is original. I believe that the overall framework offered for different ideas of the self in chapter three in which many different theories can be located is an original formulation. Likewise, I think that the framework for conceptualising different approaches to change in appendix one is also original.

Regarding critical judgement, I believe that this is demonstrated throughout the thesis in the critical appraisal of a wide range of ideas from different fields including action research, complexity, postmodern thinking, sociology and psychology as well as 'high' and 'popular' culture. It is further demonstrated in a critical assessment of aspects of my practice. It is this assimilation of a critical synthesis of others' ideas and my own practice into my own form of reflective practice as exhibited in the PhD and then fed back into the different contexts of my practice that I believe demonstrates critical judgement – not just in theory but in practice.

A further criterion for the award of a PhD is the "extent and merit of the work". I think this has been demonstrated through the wide ranging nature of the inquiries engaged in and the theoretical material used alongside those inquiries.

A PhD can also be expected to contain material worthy of being published. The Complexity and Management Centre at the University of Hertfordshire are publishing chapter three and appendix one as working papers. Appendix one has been submitted to, and encouragingly received by, the Journal of Leadership and Organisational Development with some suggestions made for revision of the article appropriate to its publication.

Section three: dialogical postscript

I noticed that once you started writing about epistemology and then validity the other voices dried up.

Yes, the 'scholarly' voice started to become dominant. The critical voice was present at the beginning but only found his way into the writing by piggybacking onto the 'scholarly' voice.

It's interesting that other voices were silenced, even though you were writing about plurality and diversity. Why do you think that was?

I think that because of the articles on validity I had looked at, I was strongly influenced by the style of writing encountered in them and reproduced that style in my own work. I do think, though, that in section three when introducing the criteria for validity that I want to put forward, a different style became available. This felt to me like a creative combination of a more personal voice coupled with the critical and scholarly academic voice in me that was stimulated by reading the articles and enjoyed weaving together the ideas in the articles with my own thoughts about validity.

Chapter Ten

Reflections

“.....whether you succeed or not is irrelevant – there is no such thing - making your unknown known is the important thing – and keeping the unknown always beyond you – catching crystallising your simpler clearer vision of life – only to see it turn stale compared to what you vaguely feel ahead – that you must always keep working to grasp – The form must take care of its self if you can keep your vision clear - I some way feel that everyone is born with it clear but that with most of humanity it becomes blasted – one way or another.

You and I don't know whether our vision is clear in relation to our time or not – No matter what failure or success we may have – we will not know – But we can keep our own integrity – according to our own sense of balance with the world and that creates our form.

What others have called form has nothing to do with our form – I want to create my own. I can't do anything else – if I stop to think what others – authorities or the public – or anyone – would say of my form I'd not be able to do anything.”

Georgia O'Keeffe (1923)

I have tried to take Georgia O'Keeffe's words to heart and mind in creating this thesis. One of the most empowering comments made to me just before I embarked on writing the draft for this thesis was by Professor Susan Weil who urged me to free myself of trying to meet what I imagined the expectations of my supervisor were. At the same time, of course, whilst striving to create my original form, many people, ideas and genres have influenced me, consciously and unconsciously. I have striven to create a form which recognises and honours the multiple voices engaged in writing this thesis whilst at the same time recognising that these individual voices are not themselves isolated but mediated and shaped by cultural practices and the social forms of expression and genres available to them.

Edward Said (1997) points out, when discussing the relationship between Valery and Mallarme, that the nature of influence is not simple. Said says that;

“Repetition, refinement, amplification, loading, overloading, rebuttal, overturning, destruction, denial, invisible use – such concepts modify a linear (vulgar) idea of influence into an open field of possibility.” (p. 15).

Said’s words here, though from a different domain, resonate with ideas of non-linearity and circular causation from the sciences of complexity, which I have referred to throughout the thesis (Stacey, 2000). This thesis represents a sustained attempt to articulate and map out the ‘fields of possibility’ that shape and are shaped by my practice. It is out of this ongoing dialectic between self and other, gesture (sending my writing to others) and response (receiving their replies), that my thesis and my practice have been created.

For this final part of the thesis, I will make use of the dialogical conversational form seen earlier in sections of chapters two and seven. Similar characters will take part. A, the protagonist; B, the questioner; and C the cynical critic.

B. Well, overall, what have you made of it? How satisfied are you?

A. I’m generally satisfied. I have felt that the writing has been able to take its own course and the changing directions of the thesis, its stops and starts, its unexpected movements and moods have genuinely surprised me. I had a sense of an overall form emerging, in the writing of the draft, and have been delighted when, on occasions, I feel that threads are being spontaneously connected without me having to work so consciously and deliberately to do this. I enjoyed and appreciated the intensity of focus I was able to offer this work during the three months of last autumn. At times, too, I have had a sense of the thesis both bringing together and drawing the curtain on a particular phase of my life, and this ending is tinged with sadness, as well as excitement about a less known future.

At other times, I have really understood and experienced how writing can itself be a powerfully enabling and emancipatory form of practice. This is Lather’s test (1986) of ‘catalytic validity’, as it relates to my own empowerment through writing. In some obvious and some subtle ways, my confidence was increased through the writing of the draft thesis. Immediately after finishing the draft there was a new-found clarity to my voice as I talked with clients and potential clients about work I was about to do. In addition, during the three months of creating

the draft, much of the writing directly impacted sessions I taught on the MBA and MSc programmes at Roffey Park. Whilst out running, and not consciously thinking about work, new ideas popped into my mind, and I was able to imagine myself in an excited way running interesting sessions on research philosophy and methods. As I recounted, though, in the introduction, the confidence and enthusiasm of this more sanguine autumnal voice has shifted to a more melancholic and cautious spring mood.

I'm now beginning to wonder what the critic might have to say about the thesis.

- C. Hmmmmmmm. I was just waiting for the orgy of self-congratulation to die down. As the Wolf, played by Harvey Keitel, memorably says towards the end of *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994), having helped Jules (Samuel L. Jackson) and Vincent (John Travolta) out of a fix: "Well, let's not start suckin' each other's dicks quite yet."

Also, I thought you said you didn't want to write a 'victory narrative'.

So, let's start with what could be a major flaw. It seems to me that you have not pursued in a truly systematic way any of the inquiry questions you have offered. Rather you have allowed the research to drift in an ad hoc fashion from one question to another, picking up a different question when it suited you, and justifying this with a rather sloppy notion of 'emergence'. Where is the discipline and rigour in all this?

- A. I agree that you have found a potentially serious criticism. I also notice in a way that I have not properly registered before that you speak with the voice of a certain kind of patriarchal power and authority. I think you assert discipline in a very traditional, regulated, almost militaristic way. I think there is another kind of discipline at work in this text. That is the discipline of a life lived with genuine inquiry; a softer, more gentle, humane, less punitive, ongoing discipline in which threads are woven together, meanings formed and reformed, connections made, lost and re-made, in which the purpose of the thesis remains perpetually emergent, always changing but the thesis is not a purposeless account. This is the form of discipline Mary Catherine Bateson (1990) refers to and likens to a craft activity in 'Composing a Life.'

I'm trying in the thesis, as far as I can, to give an account of life and work as it is lived, not the consequent post-hoc rationalisations, systematisations, and reconstructed explanations given with the benefit of hindsight. I think there is an unfolding discipline in the text, one based on internal, personal, aesthetic standards as well as on the externally imposed discipline of writing an academic thesis. It is out of the interaction of these two disciplines, what Heaney (1999) calls 'creative intuition' and 'conscious structuring', and what Geoff Mead (2001) refers to as 'mythos' and 'logos', that the thesis emerges.

In addition, I refer to the point made by Winter (1998b) when he asks:

"The question at issue is how far the subsequent process of professional development can be equated with the idea of systematically applying theory to experience. The work of Benner (1984) based on Dreyfus (1981), emphasises that as one becomes more experienced, more 'expert', this process rapidly ceases to be 'systematic' and becomes instead intuitive, creative, elliptical."

- C. OK. Maybe you have a point there about the nature of professional development. But, what about the methodology? Surely there should be some system there? Shouldn't you be arguing for a particular set of methods, and convincing the reader of their appropriateness in relation to the inquiries you are conducting?
- A. I have used a variety of methods in my inquiry practice. It is true that I have not argued rigorously for their particular relevance - they have naturally and intuitively seemed appropriate to me, and I have further fashioned their use in the using of them. Does a carpenter have to argue for the relevance of a hammer to bang in a nail? The more important question is whether the nail goes in straight. And I hope to have shown in the thesis that the methods I have used have born fruit.

Besides, I would also like to draw your attention to the work of the philosopher of science, Paul Feyerabend. In his book, 'Against Method' (1988), he argues, through a careful, historical analysis of significant scientific breakthroughs, against the commonly held view that science progresses through scientists following in a standardised, systematic way the conventions and forms of what is held at any one point to be best scientific practice. He says:

"The idea of a method that contains firm, unchanging, and absolutely binding principles for conducting the business of science meets considerable difficulty when confronted with the results of historical research. There is not a single rule, however plausible, that is not violated at some time or other. It becomes evident that such violations are not accidental events, they are not results of insufficient knowledge or of inattention which might have been avoided. On the contrary, we see that they are necessary for progress." (p. 14).

So I think you may be holding on to an illusion when you give so much weight to this idea of knowledge, even within the field of the natural sciences, being generated through the application of a systematic pre-ordained method.

- C. Hmmmmmmmm. But what about a literature review? If you are not going to write a conventional thesis following a sound, rigorous methodology, you at least have to show that you have critically engaged with the relevant academic literature.
- A. Actually, I have no doubt the thesis has academic depth in terms of the range of ideas and the quality of the argumentation used. Chapter three resembles most closely what could be termed a literature review. Even that, though, whilst being comprehensive, could not, because of its subject matter - the nature of the self – claim to be exhaustive.

But also, and importantly, and in the light of postmodern thinking about the intertwining of knowledge and power and the fragmentation between and within academic disciplines, who is to define what is the relevant literature, and by what criteria? I was struck by a passage in Stephen Rowland's (2000) book, 'The Enquiring University Teacher', where he refers to two books on the subject of the outcomes of higher education teaching. One book references 132 authors and editors, the other 126. Despite this being a relatively narrow field, and also that both books are well-respected within the field, they only have one reference in common. My argument, therefore, is that for the subject matter of this thesis, which is far more wide-ranging than the subject matter of the books Rowlands mentions, there is not a clearly defined, universally agreed and accepted body of literature. I believe that my thesis both creates its own

reference body of literature and also positions itself within that field of literature.

C. OK. I can go along with that (just about). But what about the way you have included the more appreciative comments from others emails and excluded some of the more critical ones? I was particularly thinking of one comment that Ralph Stacey made after reading your draft.

A. What was that?

C. He said in his email of 31st January 2003 alongside his positive comments on the readability of your thesis that: "Going back to your title I think you demonstrate how you and others create your practice but there is less indication of how your practice shapes you." So how do you answer that?

A. I think the overall accumulated effect which my practice, and my increased understanding of it through the methods described during the writing of this thesis, has had on me is to shift the trajectory of my practice out of the current context of management and organisational development altogether in which I am working. I have become increasingly uncomfortable with the prevailing instrumental orientation of this field, as well as its unquestioning assumption of ideas of growth and development, whether personal or economic, as I outlined in chapter three.

I cannot claim a 'victory narrative' and be able to show unequivocally how my practice has improved these last six years, and, alongside that, my self has been developed. I cannot cast this thesis in the form of taking action, reflecting on it, taking further action to be more effective, reflecting on that and so on, all of which would accumulate to building a case for the sustained development of my practice. Rather the effect on me has been to now want to find a new form of practice, or a way of practicing what I do in a different context. At the moment this has led me to decide to leave part-time employment at Roffey Park in January 2004 and to consider doing VSO in September 2004. The rest is genuinely unknown.

B. In chapter nine, you set out your own criteria of judgement by which the thesis could be assessed. How do you evaluate your work against those criteria?

- A. Actually, most of the criteria are set up to be best judged by others. Some criteria can *only* be judged by others. For example, does it 'help the reader make connections to his or her own life', and 'generate learning for the reader'?

Is it 'trustworthy', and 'engaging and interesting'? As far as I know, and to the best of my intent, it is 'trustworthy'. I still find parts of it interesting to read, and I take that as an encouraging sign. All the comments received about my draft (some of which are included in the introduction) indicate that others found it interesting.

Does it illustrate 'the socially constructed nature of the self'? Again I think so in that I have both theoretically argued for such a position and also tried to locate my autobiographical writings in a wider social, historical and cultural field.

Regarding the criteria concerned with form, I think the thesis is sufficiently non-linear within the constraints of the overall written form. Certainly writing it, I found myself criss-crossing between the different chapters, and sections within each chapter. I did though have an unrealised ambition to try to break completely with linear form, modelled on Doris Lessing's (1973) 'The Golden Notebook'. In this remarkable novel, after a number of iterations of separate chapters detailing financial, literary, personal and political notes and observations recorded in separate coloured notebooks, she creates the chaotic fertility of the golden notebook in which all her previous arbitrary distinctions break down. I would have liked to be able to do something similar.

In relation to aesthetic depth, I feel mostly aesthetically satisfied with it. I find its overall form pleasing and congruent with the ideas within it.

I think the quality of the argument is generally sound. There were some places where that needed to be tightened up or expanded and the different responses to the draft gave me greater clarity about that. I also think that the thesis shows considerable reflexivity, without this becoming overly laboured or endlessly self-referential.

Does it 'resist overall explanation and tidy closure?' I hope so! Partly closure is militated against by the open-ended nature of completing a draft, sending it to others, engaging in their responses, and then further working on the thesis.

- C. What about whether it is ethical? I think you could be on sticky ground there.
- A. Why do you say that?
- C. Well at least one person, 'Simone', has explicitly refused her permission for you to publish your autobiographical account entitled 'my second twenty one years'. What about other people referred to in the thesis?
- A. All the people from the MSc groups in chapter seven have given their permission to write about them. When named in my accounts they are given a fictitious name. I have checked the content of chapters seven and eight with the chief executive of Roffey Park to ensure that she does not feel there is any risk of reputational damage to Roffey Park.

All the people whose emails I quote have given me their permission to do so. I have checked with all the people involved in the examples and illustrations in chapter eight and they are comfortable with the accounts represented.

I have kept my word and not referred to *any* of the work I did over a fifteen month period with XYZ organisation. In so doing, I have, thereby, written off every one of the 20000 or so words of my account of working in this organisation, which in terms of my practice, represents the most extensive and fully realised way of working with 'self-organising emergence' in enabling change in the context of a large, high-profile organisation.

So that leaves 'Simone'. I believe I have gone to exceptional lengths to avoid identifying her. I have also offered her the opportunity to include her voice in this text. Her refusal to grant me her permission to publish the text 'my second twenty one years' (when I had not asked for it) and her threat of legal action, I regard as an act of intimidation. I do not want to be silenced in this way. Hence I have decided to make this account public, and follow Foucault's (1980) admonition to "speak truth to power."

Regarding Bleakley's point that autobiographical and other writing has an 'ethical focus,' I trust this is clear in my work. I have attempted to write about 'the community' and other situations in a way that explores the morality and values lying at the heart of them. Chapter seven shows how I have come to understand

my 'living educational theory' through the values that I have experienced emerging in my work as an educator of people and organisational development professionals. I have chosen not to labour and make completely explicit the connections between my autobiographical writings and my 'living educational theory' because I trust in the ability of my writing to suggest these connections to the reader. Also, I do not subscribe to a simplistic, psychologically based theory, which causally locates and explains present actions and values in past experience. I agree with Doris Lessing's (1973) related comment in the preface to 'the Golden Notebook', that my thesis "is alive and potent and fructifying and able to promote thought and discussion only when its plan and shape and intention are not understood, because that moment of seeing the shape and plans and intention, is also the moment when there isn't anything more to be got out of it." (p. 22)

So, in summary, as far as I am able to judge, I have met the criteria.

- B. Finally, in chapter one, you quote the following lines from Dante (1949) and make a short comment on them, taken from your journal, dated February 1997.

"In the middle of the road of my life
I awoke in a dark wood
where the true way was wholly lost."

I don't know if it is too much of an extravagance to hope that the research will
enable the 'true way' to be rediscovered."

To what extent has this research enabled you to rediscover the 'true way'?

A. What an impossible question! The self that I am now is undoubtedly both the same and different to the self who started this thesis nearly six years ago - echoing the lines of T.S. Eliot quoted in the prologue. And the self that I am now has been critically formed by the activities described in this thesis, including the writing of the thesis. The thesis has aimed to show in practice, as well as in theory, what it could mean to live and work with a different notion of the self to the conventional one i.e. more relational, more multiple, more embodied and more imaginal.

And in so doing, and, when the first draft was completed in December 2002, I felt more enriched, more present to myself and others, more confident, more imaginative and more competent. As to whether this is 'the true way', that is another thesis.....

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Appendix One

Beyond traditional ways of working with Organisational Change

Introduction

Consider the following scenario, which is familiar to me both through my own practice as an organisational development consultant and from the accounts of other managers and consultants.

A senior management team has set time aside from their usual operationally driven concerns and agenda-packed meetings for an 'awayday' or 'off-site' meeting. It is thought that some 'quality' time needs to be invested in creating a different kind of organisational culture and a genuinely shared vision for the way the team will work together in the future. On the 'awayday', time is spent forging a compelling vision, using creative right-brain based techniques (eg visualisation, making a collage) as well as more traditionally based analytical techniques (eg SWOT, data from questionnaires, market research).

Often an overarching vision can indeed be created on occasions like this, one which appears to have the support of all team members. This can create genuine energy, passion and excitement. The team then use their newly minted vision to agree a strategy, which will take them from where they are now, the current state, to where they want to be (their future state). This might include agreements about how they will begin to work together differently. The team return to their work initially enthused by their new vision. As time goes on, though, patterns of behaviour and ways of working that were the target for change persist. Plans that had been set do not materialise. People express cynicism about the intended changes. The initiative fizzles out.

This appears to be a relatively common scenario (Beer, Michael and Eisenstat, 1990). Various reasons can be put forward to explain the apparent failure of such initiatives to create lasting change. Typical reasons often given include:

- team members were not really signed up to the change
- key stakeholders in the change were insufficiently involved or were excluded
- the proposed change was poorly communicated
- the change was not sufficiently well led and/or sponsored

- key leaders failed to 'walk the talk', that is to embody the change in their behaviour.

These are all potentially valid ways of making sense of how change did not occur in this scenario. But what if the reasons for the failure are to be found in the overall orientation to and way of thinking about change that this scenario embodies, rather than lying in any of the specific reasons outlined above?

'Modernity'

This article will argue that the dominant and most common approaches to organisational change and development are rooted in a set of assumptions and practices whose underlying and deep-rooted rationale and legitimacy can be found in the worldview associated with 'modernity'. 'Modernity' is used here to refer to the particular combination of technological, economic, cultural and institutional features ushered in by the scientific and philosophical revolutions of the seventeenth century and the social revolutions of the eighteenth century (Jameson, 1984; Giddens 1990; Toulmin 1990; Gergen 1999).

Different writers locate the genesis of 'modernity' at different points (Toulmin, 1990). Yet most could subscribe to the description of 'modernity' offered by the critic Cahoon (1996) as;

"The positive self-image modern western culture has often given to itself... ..of a civilisation founded on scientific knowledge of the world and rational knowledge of value, which places the highest premium on individual human life and freedom, and believes that such freedom and rationality will lead to social progress through virtuous self-controlled work, creating a better material, political and intellectual life for all."

This worldview, originating in the seventeenth century in the scientific work of Newton, Galileo and Bacon and the philosophical thought of Descartes has had a profound effect on shaping the patterns of thought and social institutions of the western world (Tarnas, 1991).

In the field of organisational development, such a worldview leads to an underlying perspective and set of related assumptions that change and development in organisations

can be made to happen through the application of a set of rationally based principles, processes and practices.

In organisational change programmes and methodologies this typically takes the form sketched out in the scenario at the beginning of this article and summarised as follows. First create a vision of the organisation's future state. Such a vision should not just be analytically sound and intellectually rigorous and challenging but also serve to capture the hearts of organisational members. Then analyse and diagnose exactly the current state of the organisation - where the organisation is now. Next develop a change programme which will take the organisation from where it is now to the desired future state. This is the basis of many change models over the decades including force field analysis (Lewin, 1951), Gap Analysis (Ansoff, 1965), Egan's model A and B (1988), and a variety of organisational culture change questionnaires that aim to identify both the existing and the preferred culture (eg Harrison and Stokes, 1992; Cameron and Quinn, 1998).

This underlying way of thinking finds further elaboration in Kotter's (1995) influential model of change in which organisational transformation is characterised as moving sequentially through a predefined sequence of eight stages.

The underlying assumptions informing this way of thinking about change can be summarised as follows;

1. "Change can be engineered."

Change is a process that can be actively planned and guided, and needs to be led by the most senior people in the organisation; it is best managed in a staged, linear sequence. The key point here is that change is a process that is done to an organisation - the underlying metaphor is of engineered change.

2. "Change can be usefully described in general universal theories."

There are a set of universally applicable general principles, such as Kotter's (1995) model, which can be cast in an abstract, propositional form that can be schematically used to guide organisations through change.

3. "Change is brought into being through creating a future vision."

Change occurs through the positing of a preferred future state, a compelling vision, which is used to provide the “creative tension” (Senge, 1990, 1994), impetus, inspiration and energy to take people from the present to the desired future.

4. “Processes of organisational change can be described in politically and morally neutral, value-free terms.” Such ways of thinking about and working with change as described in the above three assumptions are politically neutral in that they do not serve any particular ideological positions.

These assumptions are not separate but interlinked. They work to reinforce one another. They usually remain unquestioned. We are so familiar with them. They have established themselves as the typical mental infrastructure in which we think and act. They provide the usual starting point from which programmes of organisational change are initiated, designed, implemented and evaluated.

And yet these assumptions are being increasingly questioned. The whole edifice of ‘modernity’ has been under a sustained critical attack in the twentieth century. Philosophically, the whole movement described as ‘postmodernism’ (Derrida, 1981; Lyotard, 1984; Harvey, 1989) has challenged and deconstructed the philosophical basis on which ‘modernity’ was founded. Postmodernism is not, of course, a unified movement. Chia (1998) characterises postmodern thought as;

“A loosely-clustered pot-pourri of ideas for grasping, amidst the unquestioned achievements of modern science and technology, the accompanying sense of loss, foreboding, rootlessness, fragmentation, and malaise precipitated by the very instruments of modernity over the past two hundred years or more.”

Within science, too, the developments first of quantum science in the early part of the twentieth century and chaos and complexity sciences in the latter half of the twentieth century have cast doubt on the mechanistic certainties of traditional scientific thinking.

In organisational development, there is, now, linked to this powerful critique of ‘modernity’, a growing body of organisational theory and practice arising which challenges the taken for granted nature of the four assumptions outlined above and the ways of working they both foster and are fostered by.

In this article, each of the four assumptions will be taken in turn and the basis of the theoretical challenge to them outlined. From this, some emerging directions for practice will also be indicated.

Assumption 1: “change can be engineered”

The basis of most organisational change programmes is guided, purposeful change. In fact at the heart of most definitions of the whole field of organisational development is the idea of planned change. Burke (1992) defines organisational development as “a planned process of change in an organisation’s culture through the utilisation of behavioural science technologies, research and theory.” Change programmes are expected to realise planned outcomes and much effort and energy is expended on ensuring that this happens. This is believed to be the basis of managing change well.

Underlying this is a view of an organisational world that can be ordered, predicted and controlled, and that certain actions can be taken which will have predictable and definite outcomes. And further underlying this view of organisational reality is the scientific worldview of modernity, a world of identifiable cause and effect linkages, which can be modelled and explained using the linear equations discovered by Isaac Newton. The guiding metaphor for this world is that of a mechanism, whether that mechanism is that of ‘clockwork’ as originally formulated by Descartes (Capra, 1982) or more contemporary manifestations of this in computer-based information processing systems.

In recent decades, first the sciences of chaos, and then of complexity, have offered a fundamental challenge to this worldview of predictability and order. Instead, complexity scientists working across many disciplines (Waldrop, 1992; Lewin, 1993) have emphasised the unfolding, open-ended, inherently unpredictable, self-organising nature of living systems existing in far-from-equilibrium conditions (Prigogine, 1984). The well known “butterfly effect” (Gleick, 1987) shows how tiny, apparently negligible, disturbances in one part of a living system can lead to significant unpredictable change in the whole system through continually iterative amplifying processes of positive feedback.

Despite this fundamental challenge to ideas of engineered change, most change methodologies still persist with the idea that certain actions if sufficiently well planned and well communicated will lead to guaranteed outcomes. Even Peter Senge who has done much to introduce ideas of systems thinking into organisations still persists, in ‘The Fifth Discipline’ (1990), with the idea that by understanding systems archetypes,

managers will be better able to control and manage the systems they are part of. He quotes Archimedes approvingly saying “give me a lever long enough and.....single-handed I can move the world”.

Many of the ideas from chaos and complexity are now entering discourses about organisational change (Wheatley, 1992; Morgan 1997; Brown and Eisenhardt 1998; Kelly and Allison, 1999; Pascale, 1999). Yet many of these theorists remain within an underlying frame of reference of control in which these ideas are still used in an instrumental way - at their crudest they are simply converted into yet another series of recipes or blueprints for organisational success.

Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2000), in contrast, have used ideas from complexity to develop a different perspective. They argue that ideas from the sciences of complexity, many of which have been developed through computer simulations, cannot simply and uncritically be imported into understanding organisational life. They enrich thinking from complexity with ideas drawn from relational psychology, social constructionism and Hegelian philosophy to offer a perspective on organisations as socially constructed, self-organising processes of patterned, communicative action. Such a perspective draws attention to the way organisations are continually being made, sustained and transformed through self-organising ‘complex responsive processes’ of people relating together, and that the primary medium in organisational life through which this is taking place is through conversation.

Such a perspective has profound implications for practice. Shaw (2002) demonstrates how her organisational change practice is concerned with participating in the fluid, moment-to-moment, self-organising, daily ongoing conversational processes in which organisational life is being created and recreated. She stresses the importance of spontaneity and the paradox of both continuity and difference as intrinsic to the nature of change. From this perspective any notion of planned change is an oxymoron.

Assumption 2. “Change can be usefully described in general universal theories.”

It has become an axiomatic *modus operandi* of western thought to think in theories, which offer generalisations across different instances and specific contexts. Western scientific methods have been developed and achieved great success through making general deductions from observation and testing general hypotheses through further

specific controlled experiments. One of the defining characteristics of 'modernity' has been the value placed on scientific inquiry and the belief that such inquiry provides rigorous, ideologically untainted and value-free grounds for knowledge which can be progressively developed and used for the good of humanity.

In his book 'Cosmopolis', subtitled 'The Hidden Agenda of Modernity', Toulmin (1990) provides a historical account of the social conditions in which modernity arose. He dates a critical dimension of modernity in the 1630's arising from the concerns of thinkers like Descartes in logic and epistemology, and Galileo in science, to establish rationality and certainty as the firm foundations for knowledge and unequivocal criteria to base and implement decisions regarding human welfare. He argues that the key shift these thinkers, and then others such as Newton, Kepler, Locke and Leibniz, made was;

"From a style of philosophy that keeps equally in view issues of local, timebound practice, and universal timeless theory, to one that accepts matters of universal, timeless theory as being entitled to an exclusive place on the agenda of philosophy." (p. 24)

In a similar vein, he also says of these thinkers that;

"The three dreams of the rationalist thus turn out to be aspects of a larger dream. The dreams of a rational method, a unified science and an exact language, unite into a single project. All of them are designed to "purify" the operation of human reason, by decontextualising them: i.e. by divorcing them from the details of particular historical and cultural situations."

For Toulmin, the scientific modernity ushered in during the seventeenth century makes a decisive break with the earlier more literary Renaissance humanism of the sixteenth century represented by figures such as Montaigne, Rabelais and Shakespeare who could have provided an alternative and complementary foundation for a different kind of modernity. Toulmin sees these literary figures advocating a more practically oriented sceptical philosophy, which is tolerant of the ambiguity, uncertainty and diversity that Descartes and others wanted to eliminate.

Toulmin's historical reflections may at first sight seem a long way from pragmatic concerns about organisational change. But it is precisely his critique of the quest for certainty and rationality in the form of universal timeless principles that has subsequently

dominated western science and philosophy and his reassertion of the relevance of the oral, the particular, the local and the timely found in Renaissance humanists that is also surfacing in the practice of organisational development. For example, an emphasis on the oral mirrors the concerns of others to place conversation at the centre of organisational (Isaacs, 1999; Shaw, 2002) and civic (Shotter, 1993; Zeldin, 1998) life.

The thrust of postmodern thinking, particularly exemplified in the work of Lyotard (1984) and Foucault (1980), has relentlessly challenged the grounds on which any theory can claim to provide universal, timeless general knowledge. Lyotard (1984) is sceptical of all, what he terms 'meta-narratives', whether these are scientifically, theologically, politically, economically, psychologically or sociologically defined. He resists the claims of any discipline, scientific or otherwise, to set up the ultimate grounds for knowledge from which all epistemological claims have to be validated.

Cilliers (1998) offers a useful summary of Lyotard's thinking.

"Different groups, (institutions, disciplines, communities) tell different stories about what they know and what they do. Their knowledge does not take the form of a logically structured and complete whole, but rather takes the form of narratives that are instrumental in allowing them to achieve their goals and to make sense of what they are doing. Since these narratives are all local, they cannot be linked together to form a grand narrative which unifies all knowledge. The postmodern condition is characterised by the co-existence of a multiplicity of heterogeneous discourses." (p. 114)

As with Toulmin's writing, there is a similar emphasis on the local, and the refusal to subordinate the local and specific to the universal and general.

This postmodern critique is important because it challenges the assumptions on which much organisational theory is based. Many theories of change are cast in similar but, less over-arching, meta-narratives. To use the example of Kotter's model again, eight steps or principles of change are identified and put forward which are believed to be valid across all organisations at all times. The specific instances, the particular dynamics, emotional atmospheres, personalities and contexts are suppressed and subordinated to the general principles. Yet in actually working with organisational change, it is precisely the specific dynamics and contexts that are constantly met. Kotter's model, despite

being one of the more sophisticated of its type, seems a pale reflection of the colour and complexity of organisational life.

For example, I have been working on a relatively small assignment (in terms of consulting days allocated) with an organisation on the apparently straightforward task of helping to create a professional development programme for a team of people involved in a relatively high profile project. These people are employed on a freelance basis rather than a salaried basis. This task, in addition, occurs in the context of recent changes in senior people within a significant partner organisation, and an impending restructuring of the division in which the project is based. Furthermore this project embodies important gender and ethnic issues. The holder of a significant post in the division has been away for two periods of maternity leave. Her replacement whilst away has been two people job sharing. The system of roles and relationships constituting this project is then further coloured by the particular alliances and disagreements, patterns of liking and enmity, and unresolved tensions, which characterise any organisational network of relationships. Any attempt, (such as the one that is now being made), to describe any particular situation in suitably abstract and decontextualised terms, and that does not break confidentiality or refer to the specific personalities of the key people involved, gets only a limited way to illustrating the real themes, issues and vitality of helping to facilitate change in this project.

By promulgating, or in the case of major consulting businesses, actively marketing and selling general, universally applicable, theories and methodologies of change, a particular view of thinking about change is set up - it is this way of thinking associated with modernity that is being addressed in this article. This treats thinking, in the words of Clark (2002), from his introduction to the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, like a "kind of inner tool kit, containing 'ideas' to be picked up and employed on problems as occasion requires." These forms of thinking are so engrained it seems heretical or inviting ridicule to question them. Clark argues that Heidegger's critique of modernity was a lifelong battle against "the technical interpretation of thinking", that is subordinating thought to the principles of overall technical rationality which have come to dominate western philosophy. This point will be returned to and elaborated later in this paper.

A further significant dimension of western thought is that its concepts are cast in the form of propositional logic. This way of thinking goes back to Aristotelian logic in which any proposition had either to be true or not true. Tsoukas (1995) shows how this kind

of logic has dominated organisational thinking despite the existence of other kinds of dialectical or paradoxical logic in which a statement can also contain its opposite.

Tsoukas contrasts propositional forms with narrative forms. These are the forms by which people in organisations go about understanding themselves, their relations with others, and the context in which they work. Organisational life is then understood as a vast array of different, overlapping, competing and co-validating stories clamouring for attention. The ways that certain stories are told and permitted and others are silenced and marginalised is a social and political process.

All this points, in practice, to the significance of stories and narrative sense-making in organisations (Weick, 1995). There is a growing emphasis in working with organisational change to encourage people to tell their specific stories. For example, in the method of appreciative inquiry (Hammond and Royal, 1998), people are encouraged to tell detailed stories that exemplify what works well in their organisation. This is both a corrective to the traditional modernist mindset which looks for problems to fix, rather than appreciating what is working well, and also a means to further learning by recounting very specific stories. The value of the learning is often to be found in the precise specificity of the story and others' particular responses to it rather than the attempt to extrapolate a general principle from it to be 'rolled out' to others or embodied in an organisational change programme.

Assumption 3: "Change is brought into being through creating a future vision."

At first sight it seems self-evident that change is brought about through combining a sense of dissatisfaction with the present together with the ability to envision an alternative. This is, for example, the basis of the formula attributed to David Gleicher (Beckhard and Harris, 1987) for assessing whether change is possible. Kotter (1995), too, emphasises the importance for leaders of organisational change to generate dissatisfaction with the present. Furthermore, the imaginative capacity to generate and shape alternative futures is a much celebrated aspect of the human spirit.

It is, however, worth scrutinising and critically examining what can happen when future visions are used to define organisational change efforts.

In these instances, as sketched out at the beginning of this article, the process of creating a vision is often creative and energetic. At best, it can provide an opportunity

for genuinely imaginative and innovative activity and a more open-ended exploration of personal aspirations, future strategic directions and alternative scenarios. What can then happen, however, is that the process of creating this vision (or mission statement) becomes ossified into a product which then has to be rolled out or communicated or implemented across the rest of the organisation. The fluid activity of imaginative thinking together becomes literalised into a concrete product, which has then to be sold, marketed and promoted like any commodity.

In order to overcome this separation of vision/strategy formulation and implementation, a whole range of methods have been developed (Holman and Devane, 1999), of which, perhaps the most well-known are Open Space (Owen, 1997) and Future Search (Weisbord and Janoff, 2000). They are often described as large group interventions or whole system change (Bunker and Alban, 1997) and they have been devised precisely to enable significant numbers of people to shape the future of their organisations or communities in a way that promotes ownership, participation and involvement in change processes.

But there are further profound and more hidden difficulties with the way that future visions are used. As has already been outlined, the future vision acts as a reference point in relation to the current state of the organisation to enable a planning process to be conducted which focusses on how a course can be steered to take the organisation from the present to the future. This typically assumes the paradigm of planned change that has been critiqued earlier in this article and this runs into problems because the future, like the weather, at least in England, is constantly changing.

Furthermore, it also assumes a strongly linear perspective on time. Instead of the future, as Stacey (2001) points out, following Mead (1938), Husserl (1960) and Wittgenstein (1980), being “perpetually constructed” from the present, that is arising and emerging from the present which itself is perpetually arising from the past, it is set apart from the present and the past, and dissociated from them. The future in most change models is meant to act as a guiding beacon, a stretching and inspiring challenge, a suitably “big, hairy, audacious goal” (Collins and Porras, 1994). Senge (1990), for example, sees the “creative tension” between this kind of desired future and the limitations of the present as providing the motivation to bring about change.

This projection of a preferred future to be realised through rationally based methods is a fundamental aspect of the intellectual heritage of the enlightenment and a further

illustration of how much thinking and writing about change remains steeped within this tradition.

Some writers (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947; Arendt, 1973; Foucault, 1980) have shown that this very way of thinking, rather than leading to social progress, has, in the twentieth century, equally well led to forms of totalitarianism and misplaced utopianism. Rather than the ideal future providing the light of a beacon, the desire to realise this ideal acts as an oppressive force subordinating the present to the demands of the future. Even on a personal level the positing of a preferred future - to be fitter for example - can lead to a continual sense of dissatisfaction with the present, and can work counter-productively as a change strategy.

To be clear at this point, I am not, in this article, advocating the need not to think about the future nor to plan in advance. That would clearly be stupid. I am though trying to make a point about how the future is thought of in organisational change programmes and its relation to the present and the past. As with the other assumptions outlined in this article, thinking about this differently has profound implications for practice.

Rather than trying to create a preferred future, methods such as Appreciative Inquiry (Srivistva and Cooperrider, 1999), social constructionist approaches (Campbell, 2000) and Gestalt based approaches to organisational change (Nevis, 1987) focus on what is happening in the present. Rather than needing to posit a future over and above the present, these methods draw attention as to how the present is actually being experienced and constructed and show how, paradoxically, by paying close attention to the ongoing present, the future can be changed. Through this people can indeed participate in the shaping of the future but from the basis of a focus in the present rather than extrapolating backwards from a preferred or ideal future.

Assumption 4: “Processes of change can be described in politically and morally neutral, value-free terms.”

Most theories of organisational change, again taking Kotter’s (1995) model as a prime example, are presented in value-free terms. They argue for the best or instrumentally most effective way to bring about change. They are assumed to represent an objective, unbiased view of organisational life and not to favour the interests of any particular group.

In so doing, like the other assumptions discussed in this article, they lie within the traditions of 'modernity' which assume that it is possible to investigate social and organisational reality using the methods and philosophy of traditional positivistic scientific inquiry. This places high emphasis on rational inquiry as the basis for all valid knowledge.

As already indicated, postmodern thought has challenged the basis on which scientific reasoning has established itself as the primary grounds and criteria of valid knowledge. In addition, feminist writers (Gilligan, 1982; Spretnak, 1991) have pointed out the gendered conceptions of this view of knowledge and how it serves to marginalise and silence other more traditionally female forms of knowing.

By arguing that there are no absolute grounds for truth (Lyotard, 1984), that all knowledge is socially constituted and constructed (Gergen, 1999), that knowledge and power are inseparable (Foucault, 1980), and by following Kuhn's (1970) lead in showing how scientific knowledge does not proceed as closer and closer approximations to an empirically verifiable truth, postmodern thought argues that knowledge cannot be divorced from human interests. Knowledge is always coloured by the assumptions, values, and worldview of the individual and the social context in which it is produced. There is no neutral place from which to construct objective, value free knowledge about the world. Within quantum science itself, Schrodinger demonstrated that the very act of observation changes what is being observed.

Habermas (1972) has shown how different kinds of human interests generate different kinds of knowledge. He differentiates between empirical-analytic knowledge based on a technical or instrumental interest, hermeneutic knowledge based on understanding and intelligibility, and critical knowledge based on an emancipatory interest. Habermas, here, is following and developing the work of an earlier generation of social theorists from what has commonly come to be known as 'The Frankfurt School.'

A key focus of the work of the Frankfurt school was the critique of instrumental reason, what Grubbs (2000) calls "the production of purposive-rational knowledge by positivist social science". Horkheimer (1993) argued that instrumental reason, following the tenets of positivistic science, separated knowledge from human values. This leads to a preoccupation with means – with efficiency and effectiveness – and a loss of the connection between means and ends. In so doing it assumes knowledge is universal and in the interests of all. In this way, far from being objective and politically neutral,

instrumental reason serves the interests of the status quo and the dominant groups and elite in society.

Horkheimer, like others referred to in this article, is offering a profound critique of instrumental reason which has become the dominant way of making sense of and working in social institutions such as businesses and the not-for-profit sector. The argument of this article has been that thinking in terms of this kind of instrumental reason or technical rationality lies at the basis of most approaches to organisational change.

At the same time, though, that this kind of instrumental business and managerial language and way of thinking has come to dominate the public as well as the private sector, there is a growing groundswell of opinion that is challenging the preoccupation with means and exclusive focus on organisational efficiency and asking questions about the overall purpose of business organisations. This takes many forms in practice ranging from the militant activism of some NGO's around environmental and social justice issues to the rapidly growing field of corporate citizenship (McIntosh, Leipziger, Jones and Coleman, 1998) within business itself. It is beyond the scope of this article to describe this in any depth but I will mention in brief two significant aspects here.

Writers such as John Elkington (1997) are arguing that the ultimate purpose of business should not be confined solely to the financial bottom-line. He advocates a "triple bottom line" embracing social and economic bottom lines as well as financial profitability.

There is too a growing critique of the supposed political neutrality of business. The increasingly vocal anti-globalisation movement claims that, far from bodies like the WTO and large transnational companies being politically neutral in their promotion of world trade and a free market economy, they are advocating the interests of the rich and powerful against the powerless.

Conclusion

This article has aimed to show how the most common and dominant ways of working and thinking about change can be traced to a perspective and set of assumptions linked to the worldview of 'modernity'.

In many intellectual disciplines, this worldview has been substantially critiqued, leading to what Gergen (1999) has called the triple crises of representation, value-neutrality and rationality. Similarly in the field of organisational development the assumptions and practices stemming from this worldview are being questioned. Given the nature of the challenge to modernist thinking, especially the critique of instrumental reason and totalising theories, it is not possible to group together all these new practices under the umbrella of a new grand theory or 'meta-narrative' in the form of a blueprint or set of recipes for change. This article has instead had the more modest ambition of indicating how different forms of organisational development practice are beginning to emerge that are not situated within the modernist tradition.